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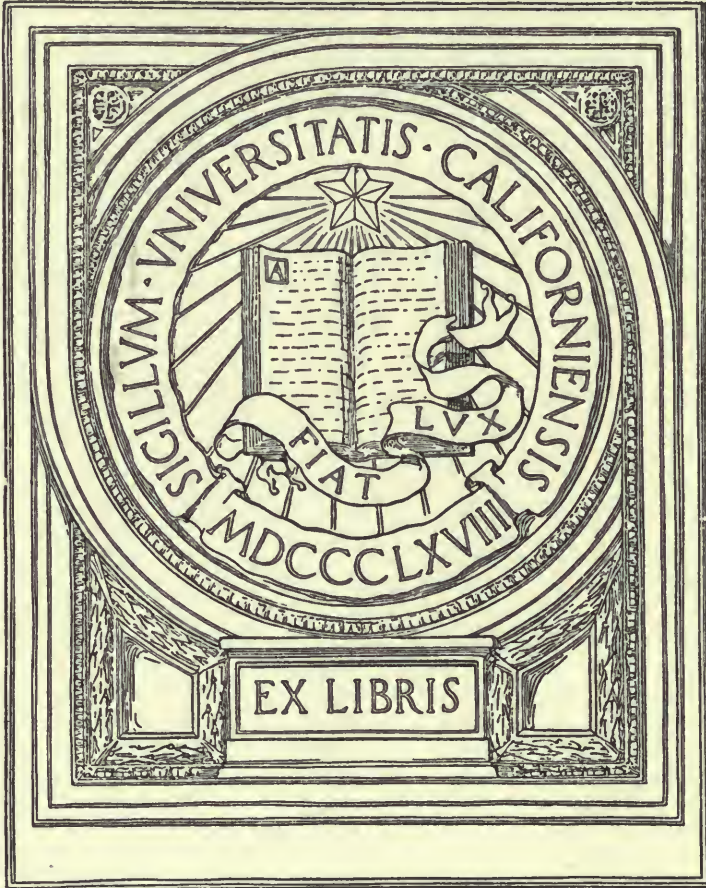
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LA PRINCESSE LOINTAINE



EDMOND ROSTAND.

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TO THE
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PREFACE.

“La Princesse lointaine,” indeed a charming masterpiece of poetry, was, it now appears, but a promise. The promise, however, was royally kept by the poet, Edmond Rostand, within the short space of three years. Witness “Cyrano de Bergerac,” in which, with something of retrospective prophecy, if the anomaly can be, Roxane exclaims :

“A bird will hop before it learns to soar.”

Let it be conceded then that, in “La Princesse lointaine,” the poet was timidly feeling his way along, while in “Cyrano” he

“Walks boldly on, with step assured.”

Hence, perhaps, some discussion of the play, and of its really great impersonator, Sarah Bernhardt. Neither the poet nor his far-famed interpreter need be disturbed, however, by the judgment of superficial critics. If “La Princesse lointaine” be the work of a beginner, we can but regret that there are not a few more beginners with so great a share of youth, enthusiasm and talent clearly proving study as well as genius.

In effect, “La Princesse lointaine” offers a striking example of romanticism, tempered by the more staid ways of the Parnassians, and diversified with wilful riming oddities à la Banville, while here and there appears a bit of “decadence,” or “symbolism,” in the form of an hiatus, or of a defective cesura.

As a play for the English-speaking stage, so different from the French, where imagination and word-picture, coupled with the swing of high-strung verse, suffice to thrill an au-

dience, "La Princesse lointaine" would perhaps be lacking in action. But as a book, if the translator shall have been successful in transposing the intense poesy that runs through the naturalness of expression in which the poet clothed quintessence of feeling, so to speak, it can hardly fail to prove attractive, especially if it be taken for what it was evidently meant to be: the animated picture of an undaunted pursuit of the ideal.

This work, the original of course, might be classed then as a poem, one that is intentionally odd, at intervals, or rather playfully neologistic, with an innocent desire to be picturesque and novel, at all events anything but commonplace. Nevertheless, it seldom, if ever, departs from the admirable naturalness of expression that marks French verse, the true poetry of which does not resort to unusual words and twisted construction.

These wilful oddities, or innovations, the translator, at first, intended to comment on, in a number of foot notes. But, as this is not a text-book, such a course might have seemed pedantic. Notes, by diverting thought into side channels, too often break the charm there is in the even flow of possibly pleasing lines. It was deemed preferable, therefore, in this instance, not to obtrude upon the reader with a comparatively easy show of learning, thus depriving him, or her, of the enjoyment there is in search, discovery and perhaps explanation by one's self.

Oddities, neologisms, naturalness and swing, the translator has endeavoured faithfully to render, as may be seen, he believes, by those who do not judge at first glance. This he trusts that he may be permitted to state, not as an excuse for his shortcomings, but in justice to the author whose truly poetical conception he has laboured to interpret.

CHARLES RENAULD.

New York, June, 1899.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

CAST AT THE THÉÂTRE DE LA RENAISSANCE,
PARIS, 5th April, 1895.

- MELISSINDE, a Princess of Orient, Countess of Tripoli,MME. SARAH BERNHARDT.
- BERTRAND D'ALLAMANON, a Knight and troubadour from Provence.....MR. GUITRY.
- JOFFROY RUDEL, Prince of Blaye, a troubadour from Aquitaine.....MR. DE MAX.
- FATHER TROPHIME, the prince's Chaplain.....
MR. JEAN COQUELIN.
- ERASMUS, the prince's physician.....MR. CHAMEROY.
- SQUARCIAFICO, a Genoese tradesman.....MR. LAROCHE.
- THE KNIGHT-WHOSE-ARMS-ARE-GREEN, an adventurer in the service of Emperor Manuel Comnenus.....MR. CASTELLI.
- SORISMONDE, lady of honour to Melissinde.....
MME. MARTHOLD.

- THE SKIPPER
- TROBALDO
- FRANCOIS
- PEGOFAT
- BRUNO
- BISTAGNE
- JUAN
- MARRIAS

MARINERS.

THE PILOT.

FIRST PILGRIM.

SECOND "

THIRD "

FOURTH "

FIFTH "

NICHOLOSE, valet to Squarciafico.

A BOY SAILOR.

MARINERS, MUSICIANS, SLAVES.

XII CENTURY.

LA PRINCESSE LOINTAINE.

THE PRINCESS FAR-AWAY.

ACT I.

The deck of a galley that appears to have come a long way through very tempestuous weather: Sails ripped, yards broken, ropes in a tangle, mast started. There are evidences of fighting having taken place on board: spots of blood, arms strewn here and there. Just before dawn. Grey and transparent sky growing pale. Stars vanishing. Sea of a violet hue, with foggy streaks. Indistinct horizon. By degrees, as this act progresses, the light increases.

SCENE I.

MARINERS: BRUNO, BISTAGNE, MARRIAS, PEGOFAT, TROBALDO, FRANCOIS, *etc.* THE PILOT, *then the* SKIPPER *and* FATHER TROPHIME.

PEGOFAT *and* BRUNO (*in the rear*).

One. . . . two. . . . three. . . . houp!

(*Body thrown overboard; a splash.*)

PEGOFAT.

It's done !

BRUNO.

Another mate

Who'll never swim thy roadstead, Tripoli!

REGOFAT (*doffing his cap*).

Farewell, my boy!

BRUNO.

It reddens. Here is dawn.
(*They come down.*)

FRANCOIS (*waking and stretching*).

Whose plunge was that?

BRUNO.

The cut-throat Andrin's.

FRANCOIS.

Ah!

That cursèd fever!

(*after looking over the deck*).

Well, the sea's been rough!

BISTAGNE (*his eyes aloft*).

The wind has, too. No sheets are left!

BRUNO.

Nor tyes!

FRANCOIS.

Our mast is shaky. Better cut it down.

BISTAGNE.

I'd rather eat.

BRUNO.

The stores have given out!

FRANCOIS (*rising*).

That wound of mine!

(*staggers*).

But I can hardly stand!

Now, should we meet another Berber craft,
We'd be in a sorry trim!

BRUNO.

We'd fight the same!

For we must reach our goal, oppose who will!
Fair warning, then, to crafts that intervene!

BISTAGNE.

When shall we reach the Saracenic coast?

THE PILOT.

Quite soon, I hope. Bad weather's held us back!
Ah! had I but that needle pointing North!
The needle with the stone to rub it!

BISTAGNE (*shrugging his shoulders*).

Stuff!

THE PILOT.

No stuff! Some keep it safely in a gourd.
You rub. The stone for iron has a love,
And so the needle turns to North. It's clear!

THE MARINERS.

Ha! ha!—He's daft!—How stupid!—Needle! Stuff!

PEGOFAT.

No needle here! This cockle-shell's enough!
The weather lifts. Our trial nears the end.

BRUNO.

Indeed! The end of thirst?

FRANCOIS.

And hunger, too?

BISTAGNE.

We've suffered long.

PEGOFAT.

May heaven help at last!

TROBALDO (*astride one of the yards*).

A sorry joke if she were homely!

THE MARINERS.

No!

She must be beautiful!—She is!—

TROBALDO.

You hear?

She *must* be marvellous!

BISTAGNE.

And even more,

My son, considering what we've endured!
If not, let all beware!

BRUNO.

She must be grand!

ALL.

She is! She is!

MARRIAS.

Be sure!

AN OARSMAN.

So let us hope!

For pulling t'ward a monster would be hard!

PEGOFAT (*laughing*).

You thought of her while rowing?

OARSMAN.

Ever, yes!

BISTAGNE.

Be happy, then! All princesses are fair!

THE PILOT (*shrugging his shoulders*).

You speak of naught but *her*!

PEGOFAT.

Exhausted we,
But look! We speak of her, and we revive.

THE PILOT.

But will you even see this damozel?

BRUNO.

The Prince has sworn he'll take us all to Her,
If port is reached, and tell her that it's we
Who bore him on to lay him at her knees.

THE PILOT.

You think the Princess then will speak to us?

PEGOFAT.

Perhaps. We'll see her, though, and that is much.
All Christian lands have heard her beauty praised!

A SAILOR BOY.

Her eyes as well.

THE PILOT (*turning toward the boy*).

You'd see her eyes?

SAILOR BOY.

Of course!

PEGOFAT.

The master!

(*The Skipper has been listening for a while.*)

THE SKIPPER.

Yes; but we must reach the port,
And Prince Joffroy Rudel must live till then!

THE MARINERS.

What! Is he worse?—Alas!—

BRUNO.

A dreadful blow!

THE SKIPPER.

You see, they've closed the quarters that are his.
His friends are watching, and no doubt he rests!

PEGOFAT.

But he was singing yesterday!

BISTAGNE.

'Tis strange

How easily he can compose a song!

FRANCOIS.

What do you call the thing on which he plays?

THE PILOT (*looking wise*).

It's called a lyre.

FRANCOIS.

Ah! a lyre! Well

It makes a pleasant noise. . . .

BISTAGNE.

It helps to row!

PEGOFAT.

And when we have to tow it gives us life.

THE SKIPPER.

The Prince's chaplain! Hush!

PEGOFAT.

The capelan!

(*Father Trophime, patched gown with many holes, comes out from the poop cabin, consults the sky, and goes to the rear, where he kneels.*)

BRUNO.

A priest who's not a bore.

FRANCOIS.

He's good and frank.

BISTAGNE.

Would every vicar had such ample sleeves!

THE SKIPPER.

The gleamers there above are growing pale.

BISTAGNE.

It dawns.

(The light grows.)

FATHER TROPHIME *(on his knees)*.

O Virgin of the mariner,
Who changest roaring seas to placid seas,
Pray, cause this skiff to glide as does a swan;
And, if he live, O Virgin, Lord Rudel
Will, on thy altar at Tortosa, place
A silver galley like the one that bore
Us bravely, with its rudder, sails and oars!

THE PILOT.

Who cares? I'd rather have my needle!

BISTAGNE.

Dolt!

At all events, the prayer can do no harm.

(Erasmus comes out. He wears a doctor's gown very badly torn. Hair unkempt. Sorry-looking. The sailors assume a mocking attitude.)

BRUNO.

But here's a sight! Behold the sorry face!

FRANCOIS.

The physico!

TROBALDO *(shrugging his shoulders)*.

Fresh-water doctor he!

SCENE II.

FATHER TROPHIME, ERASMUS, SAILORS, *in the rear*.

FATHER TROPHIME *(going to Erasmus)*.

Well, Sir Erasmus, how's your patient?

ERASMUS.

Worse.

The Prince is sleeping, watched by Sir Bertrand.

(looking at the horizon).

Well, Father Trophime, well, there's naught in sight
But fog!

(indignant).

That, doctor from Salerno, I,
Just think!—should be exposed to peril thus!
Where now are my cathedra, home and books?
Alas! The winds have torn my gown to shreds,
And robbed me, one by one, of all my caps!

FATHER TROPHIME.

The Prince?

ERASMUS.

Why did this dilly-dallyer,
This poet, madly rush to danger so?
Now, when I joined his household, gentle Prince,
I meant to live in peace beneath his roof,
To tend his health on land and not at sea.
This cruise is an extremely bitter pill!
(walking to and fro, with growing fury).
Oh! may the devil string upon his hellish spit
Those pilgrims damnable from th' Orient
Who were the first to pass the castle gates,
One eve, at supper time, just as the knife,
The carver's, sought a luscious turkey's breast,
And, then and there, to speak of Melissinde.
They sang—with zeal, oh! what untimely zeal!
The daughter of Hodiern and Raymond One;
They wildly praised this Asia flower's bloom!
I still recall their round, ecstatic eyes!
They spoke so well that, suddenly, the Prince,
* This poet daft on shadow, dream and wind,
Arose, and there proclaimed the Lady his.

Since then, he's dreamed of Her, and rined for Her
 Alone; and, now, two years have wrought him so
 That, health declining, and with death at hand,
 He's struggling on toward the fair unknown,
 To see at least her face before he dies!

FATHER TROPHIME.

Erasmus. . . .

ERASMUS.

His will be a briny shroud!
 And this Bertrand d' Allamanon then, who,
 While every one dissuaded Lord Rudel,
 Extolled his love, approved his suffering,
 Declared this expedition most superb,
 And said that he himself would go along!
 Absurd, absurd!—And you, a priest, are here!
 That I should come is comprehensible,
 But you! The chaplain of the Prince! As if
 Your presence had the slightest reason in it!
 Of knights your master is the only one
 To sail without the Cross for Syria,
 And, loving pilgrim, on his lute he sings
 A goal that's other than the Holy Tomb!

FATHER TROPHIME.

Who knows the secret ends that God assigns?

ERASMUS.

We seek in Palestine a woman's eyes!

FATHER TROPHIME.

The Lord, believe me, finds it proper so.

ERASMUS.

The Lord! What does he gain for instance

FATHER TROPHIME.

All!

ERASMUS.

Oh!

FATHER TROPHIME.

Yes, he gains, at least my thought is such,
 X Through every great disinterested act;
 As much as on Crusaders' deeds, I feel
 That he must smile on love that's true and pure.

ERASMUS.

He cannot set this love adventure here
 Beside the rescue of the Holy Tomb!

FATHER TROPHIME.

His object's not this one deliverance.
 For think you not that, if he wished to chase
 A horde of infidels from off the Tomb,
 One sweep of angel wings would be enough?
 Far greater his design. Be sure it is to call
 All those who live in dullness, pride and sloth
 Away from selfish, dark indifference,
 To throw them, strong and singing, in the fray,
 Devotion-daft to seeking death afar,
 Inspired by forgetfulness of self.

ERASMUS.

Then, what the Prince is doing for his Love?

FATHER TROPHIME.

Most certainly will benefit his soul.
 It was as dead while he was gay and light;
 But, now he suffers, loves and wills, it lives.
 Let each of us put forth what strength we have;
 X The main thing is to own a heart that beats!
 The Prince has left behind him futile loves,
 All vice, and vain amusements of a court.
 How can you doubt his bettered sentiments?
 Great loves, indeed, are doing heaven's work!

ERASMUS.

So be it!

FATHER TROPHIME (*lowering his voice*).

See these oarsmen on their seats,
These mariners. What were they? Pirates, all.
Who e'er imagined crew more wicked than
These men were formerly—a pirate's crew?
But they have hired out themselves, as do
Quite often corsairs to those going East,
To bear him to his Princess Far-Away.
Their captain made the contract. At the time,
They did not even know the Princess lived,
But now, just see, they're all in love with her!

ERASMUS.

And you're content?

FATHER TROPHIME.

Delighted! Now their aim!
Is nobler far than any paltry gain!
They rave to see the Princess, dream of her,
With all their fierceness changed to gentleness.
The poet's Lady now's a Lady theirs!
We're bound to love the end to which we tend.
They want the Prince to reach her cherished eyes!
They like his love mysterious and vague,
X For humble folk admire what is great,
And feel, untaught, the poesy of things!
The grandeur of the Prince's scheme, that all
Condemn, appeals to them as light itself!

ERASMUS.

The Pilot says it is insanity!

FATHER TROPHIME.

Less simple-minded he.

ERASMUS.

What matters?

FATHER TROPHIME.

Much!

X For every ray from the ideal sent
 Into the soul destroys an evil there.
 All noble aims bring forth a nobler aim;
 No dream suggests a dream of lower flight;
 And thus to-day these men have larger hearts!
 —You seem surprised to hear me so discourse?
 Yes, I approve adventures aiming high.
 What next to this would be the Argonauts' ?
 We have a lyrically epic skiff,
 With verse for music, and a poet chief,
 With bandits for a crew where none rebels,
 That sails toward a beauty strange and pure,
 With hope no other than to be in time
 To give a dying man a glimpse of Her!
 There's but a single vice: inertia!
 And but one virtue. . . .

ERASMUS.

That?

FATHER TROPHIME.

Enthusiasm!

(He goes up.)

ERASMUS.

Hum! Well—He's not an ordinary priest. . . .

(after some thought).

We'll find him excommunicated soon.

(Bertrand, whose clothes are likewise torn, comes out of the Prince's quarters.)

BERTRAND *(to Erasmus)*.

The Prince awakes.

ERASMUS.

I'll go to him again.

(He goes in.)

SCENE III.

FATHER TROPHIME, BERTRAND, *the* SAILORS.THE SKIPPER (*to Pegofat, who has let go his oar*).

Row on!

PEGOFAT.

Three days without a thing to eat!
I cannot!

BRUNO (*groaning*).

Water!

FATHER TROPHIME (*going to Bertrand and taking his hands*).

Your devotedness
Is admirable, and your heart is brave!

BERTRAND.

My heart is weak whenever it is touched;
A hero passes, and I follow him!
I'd be no Provençal or troubadour,
If I foreswore the cause of love ideal.

(to the sailors).

Take courage, friends, we're nearing fast the port!
(to Father Trophime).

I was so weary of my life at home,
So weary of revamping, shaping words,
Of doing verses like enamel work,
As if I polished them with finger-nail!
I was a sophist vain, with juggler's mind.
While now—I'm of some little use at least.

FATHER TROPHIME.

Your courage, and the care you give the Prince. . . .

BERTRAND.

I love the prince. But I'm a poet, and
Perhaps the poem's all that captured me.

FATHER TROPHIME.

What matters? You were brave and good. My son,
We must not under-rate our every act!

BERTRAND.

Your praise confuses me, my saintly friend,
For in my heart are strong diversities!
I feel that I can rise to valiant deeds,
But I'm too oft by impulse led along.
Too easily perhaps I left my all,
Enraptured by adventure such as this.
Those slow for good are slow for evil too!
Admire not too much my lofty flights:
I am a poet. . . .

A SAILOR (*lying down, to the Skipper, who is endeavouring to make him rise*).

No! I'm done.

THE SKIPPER (*to Bertrand*).

Good Sir,

What gives them strength; just tell it once again.
(*The sailors crawl toward Bertrand.*)

PEGOFAT.

I'm hungry, Sir; describe her golden hair!

BRUNO.

I'm thirsty, Sir; describe her eyes again!

FRANCOIS TO BERTRAND.

You have so oft, on days when we despaired,
So often told us how the Princess is!

(*They surround him, all of them exhausted and supplicating.*)

BERTRAND.

Once more, then, hear of all that's fair,
And, sailors, let your spirits rise!
The sunlight plays around her hair,
* The moonlight dreams within her eyes!

When through her tresses' waving shades
Her beauty shines, subdued and deep,
All men in love are renegades,
All mistresses are called to weep.

A charm that's real, with trace so faint,
Makes hers alone a grace that's true;
A grace that would become a Saint
Who'd be a strange Enchantress too!

Her manners captivate and strike,
Her power conquers everything;
Her attitudes are flowerlike,
X Her intonations songs of spring!

Such, in her pretty oddity
That's French, but tinged with Moabite,
Is Melissinde, the rarity
That dwells in Tripoli and light!

Such is the one your hope evokes,
The one you'll see, if pilgrims tell
The truth from under sorry cloaks
That bristle thick with rattling shell!

*(While Bertrand recites the stanzas, the sailors
gradually rise.)*

PEGOFAT.

Say! How he speaks! At times he seems obscure;
But this is clear, that she is beautiful!

BRUNO.

I'm better. . . .

(They all show more activity.)

FRANCOIS *(rowing)*.

Pull!

THE PILOT.

How you excite them, Sir!

I see we have all poets for a crew!

BERTRAND.

Rudel and I make madmen of them, hey?
But, if they struggle on, it's thanks to us.
On every galley tempest-tossed I'd have
A pilot, but a poet too, and first.

PEGOFAT (*ridiculing the pilot*).

Especially with subtile pilots like. . . .

BERTRAND.

This fog will drag upon the sea till when?

THE SKIPPER.

Wait for the sun.

BRUNO (*pointing to the pilot*).

He's angry!

THE PILOT.

Patience! When
My needle comes. . . .

PEGOFAT.

Well, what? Your science will
Be powerless. Suppose you have the North,
Will that prevent our suffering on board?

BRUNO.

Will you replenish thus our larder here?

FRANCOIS.

Or make the hungry, thirsty, sailors drunk?

BISTAGNE.

Or cause them, absent here, to be at home?

TROBALDO.

And will you spread before their dazzled eyes
The riches of the land we're sailing to?

PEGOFAT.

Your North will never tell of Princesses!

FATHER TROPHIME.

They're bearing here the Prince.

(Joffroy Rudel, pale as death and terribly emaciated, with his clothes in shreds, is brought in on a stretcher. Fever makes him shiver, and his eyes are unnaturally brilliant.)

BERTRAND.

Be steady, all!

JOFFROY RUDEL *(in feeble tones)*.

The more we near, the closer death appears.

SCENE IV.

The same. JOFFROY RUDEL.

JOFFROY.

All hail to thee, O day, just dawning now!
When thou art spent, shall I have joinèd Her?
O Princess with a name mellifluous:
O Melissinde! . . . whom Emp'ror Manuel
Desired for his Empress Byzantine,
Between us still's a waste of sinople!
O flower grown from glorious Baudoin's blood
Shall I at last across the sea, afar,
With golden beach and silver fringe of waves,
See happy Tripoli in which you reign?—
Light vapours, in the distance, build as yet
But fancy's palaces!—O prison craft!
Hold death in check, to let me, ere I die,
Inhale at least, with brine, a breath of hope,
And recognise, in distance-reaching waft,
The fragrance of sweet myrtles o'er the seas!

THE PILOT.

You'll have to wait until the fog will lift!

JOFFROY.

Oh! but a glimpse! Then sleep, and dream of Her!

PEGOFAT.

You'll see Her!

JOFFROY.

Thanks, you stout and valiant voice!
What ails me though, oh, God! Until to-day
I never have despaired! Ah!—Lady mine! . . .
Row on, good oarsmen, for my soul would fly!

BRUNO.

You'll see her!

JOFFROY.

Bruno, Bistagne, Pegofat,
François the Remolar, Trobaldo, all
Who've borne for me so many varied ills,
Juan from Portingal, Marrias, and
You, Grimoart, you, Luc. . . and others—thanks!

PEGOFAT.

Be comforted. We're proud of our trip!

BRUNO.

A cruise illustrious!

FRANCOIS.

Indeed it is!

JOFFROY.

You bear not on both Cæsar and his lot;
You have but this: Joffroy Rudel and love!

FATHER TROPHIME (*approaching*).

My son, be hopeful!

JOFFROY (*with a faint smile*).

Hail, good Father, hail!
(*Turning toward Erasmus.*)

JOFFROY.

We can, when, with an eager heart and high,
We've ceased to love what we've too long possessed!

(rising on his stretcher).

Have I in vain suspended purse and scarf?
And took I staff in vain?—But now my harp!
Though weak my voice, if I can see her, oh!
I'll die with song at heart and on my lips!

(He takes the harp that hangs near him, and he strikes a few chords).

I hesitate, and dream o'er lingering chords. . . .
My song the last, the last! What shall I sing?
The loving lines that first I wrote for Her!
O stanzas first, be you the last I sing!

(He recites to his accompaniment.)

x 'Tis matter commonplace
To be attentive to
An auburn, dark or fair
Mistress,
When auburn, fair or dark,
Is captured easily. . . .
—I love the far-away
Princess!

'Tis matter plain enough
To be a lover true,
If one may kiss Her train
Each day,
Mayhap to find and press
A hand that's nothing loth. . . .
—I love the Princess Far-
Away.

But 'tis a thing supreme
To love, though not beloved,

With love profound and brave,
 Ceaseless;
 With love uncertain that's
 More noble being vain. . . .
 —I love the far-away
 Princess!

For 'tis a thing divine
 To love as fancy bids,
 When we imagine, dream,
 Or may. . . .
 Then dream is all to us.
 What's life without a dream?
 —I love the Princess Far-
 Away!

(He falls back almost lifeless.)

My strength is gone! My trembling fingers now
 Can find the strings no more, and tears prevent
 My speech! . . . O, Melissinde! . . . I hush
 Perhaps forever, since all hope is . . .

A VOICE *(in the rigging)*.

Land!

(Excitement. Joffroy rises from his stretcher, standing, with open arms.)

MARRIAS.

Yes! See!

BRUNO.

You're right! It's land!

FRANCOIS.

Hurrah! Row on!

BISTAGNE.

The fog concealed it!

JUAN.

Land of gold!

TROBALDO.

And hills

Of violet!

PEGOFAT.

Tripoli! Hurrah!

BRUNO (*running around as if wild*).

Be calm!

FRANCOIS.

It's land! It's Tripoli!

MARRIAS.

I see the palms!

BISTAGNE.

Not yet!

FRANCOIS.

I see them, too!

TROBALDO.

An alcyon!

PEGOFAT.

The beach from here is like a lion-skin!

THE PILOT.

It's Tripoli, I calculated well!

There are the long white walls and stunted trees!

ALL.

The pilot's great!

PEGOFAT.

Beneath the glowing sky,

The city's red!

BRUNO.

There's a flamingo! See!

BISTAGNE.

Let us embrace!

TROBALDO.

And sing!

PEGOFAT.

Our trials cease!

TROBALDO.

Land!

JUAN.

Land!

BISTAGNE.

Port!

PEGOFAT.

Tripoli!

JOFFROY.

The Princess! Ah!

(He faints in the arms of Bertrand.)

THE SKIPPER.

And now. . . . we'll anchor.

BERTRAND *(who, with the aid of Erasmus and Trophime, has placed again Rudel on the stretcher).*

But, he's dying! Run

Close in to shore!

THE SKIPPER.

Ah! no! We'd run afoul
 Some hidden rock, and smash this cockle-shell,
 Or else, perhaps, be stranded high and dry.
 Small boats will soon come out to us.

BERTRAND.

His eyes

Are closed.

(*To Erasmus, leaning over the Prince.*)

He breathes ?

ERASMUS.

A little better, yes.

But he is very low.

BERTRAND (*despairing*).

He cannot wait!

JOFFROY.

You speak too loud. I heard the words you said.
I knew it, though: I'm dying! Now you must,
Must carry me ashore this instant. . . .quick!
For, otherwise, good friends, like Moses, see!
I'll die while gazing on the Promised Land!

BERTRAND (*aside to Erasmus*).

Can we remove him ?

ERASMUS.

No, impossible!

JOFFROY (*struggling*).

One glimpse of Her!

ERASMUS (*offering him a phial of medicine*).

We'll stay the danger first.

Now drink and rest. And then. . . .

JOFFROY (*to Bertrand*).

Bertrand, come near.

Oh! bear me to the shore, whate'er the risk!
Since I am lost, you can without remorse
Allow me to advance perhaps my death.
I am a man! And truth is due to me.
Shall I be dead before I land ?

ERASMUS.

You will!

JOFFROY.

Oh! help, Bertrand!

ERASMUS.

But if you will remain
At rest, without a word, and calm, you'll cure. . . .
And then you'll see the Lady of your dreams!

JOFFROY.

No, no. You doctors always give us hope!
Oh! see her, friend, I must!

BERTRAND (*with decision*).

You shall!

JOFFROY.

But how?

BERTRAND.

You'll see her, I repeat. I swear it now!
I'll go, I'll speak to her, and fetch her here!

JOFFROY.

Bertrand!

BERTRAND.

She's not inhuman, I suppose.
You'll have her here before the sun has set.
Be cheerful, then. I'll tell her of your love!

JOFFROY.

Bertrand!

BERTRAND.

She'll know that, French and poet born,
You loved her, braved the Turks and tempests too,
A pilgrim seeking Her, another Cross,
And that you're here, so ill. . . .

JOFFROY.

And you believe?

BERTRAND.

That she will come? Be sure! I'll see to it
And fast!—Come, there, a skiff, a boat, a barge!
Yes, take the dinghy, that is it!—We'll see
What she will answer. Come, be quick! . . . The oars!—
I'll row myself. The beach is not so far!
You'll have your princess soon. Till then, be good!

JOFFROY.

Bertrand, if you succeed. . . .

BERTRAND.

No if! I shall!
She'll have to come here, if she will or not.

JOFFROY.

But can you even reach her where she dwells?
If you appear in such a garb as this?
The palace guards. . . .

BERTRAND.

'Tis true!

(to a sailor).

Put in the boat
My chest of finery and arms. Be quick!

JOFFROY.

One moment. . . . put this casket in besides.
My dearest gems! I offer them to you:
My clasp, my collar and my golden spurs.
A loving poet's envoy is above
A king's ambassador! Be splendid, then!
Let nothing hinder you!

THE SKIPPER *(to Bertrand)*.

You'll need a guide;
The palace is quite distant from the port.

Inquire in the first fair-looking house;
The host no doubt will offer you his aid;
You'll enter there to dress—and then proceed.

JOFFROY.

Oh! tell her she must haste—or I'll be gone!

ERASMUS.

Dear Prince, you speak too much; it weakens you.

JOFFROY.

Now I'll be silent. . . .

(to *Bertrand*).

List!

BERTRAND.

But you must rest!

JOFFROY.

Be touching, eloquent, inventive, new!
Or rather, no; just state the honest truth:
I love her, say, and die for having sung,
Distractedly, that peerless beauty, hers,
As for the sun the merry locust does!
But I will die the prince of lovers, say,
If, for two years of love, I see her once!

BERTRAND.

Yes. Speak no more.

JOFFROY.

I'm silent,—but I think!

You must not say it all no sooner there!
You must prepare her.—Yes, I hush, I hush!—
And, to prepare her well, you might recite
The stanzas that just now I tried to sing.
Yes, that perhaps would be the better way
To let her grasp my love.

BERTRAND.

Trust all to me.

I'll say your verse.

JOFFROY.

And you will say it well?

BERTRAND (*with assumed levity*).

Should I twist one, what a catastrophe!
Be easy: every stanza'll have a ring!

JOFFROY.

We may not meet again. Let us embrace!
(*They embrace.*)

FATHER TROPHIME.

While he is gone, I'll stay upon my knees.

ERASMUS (*aside, to Bertrand*).

Perhaps he'll last two days; or he may die
To-night; he may be dead an hour hence!

THE SKIPPER (*also aside, to Bertrand*).

Fair Sir, if he should die ere you return,
We'd hoist the canvas that is named the wolf,
The blackened sail that we, the corsairs, use
At night. . . . when we object to what is bright,

FATHER TROPHIME (*accompanying Bertrand*).

By all that's dear, persuade her, fetch her here!
Insist!

BERTRAND.

I shall. Unless dark warning flies!

(*He steps over the gunwale, and descends into the boat. The splash of oars is heard.*)

JOFFROY.

Now place me gently near the bulwark there!
She'll come, I'm sure.

THE VOICE OF BERTRAND (*from the boat*).

I promise you she will!
Be silent. Rest till I return!
(*Noise of oars, decreasing.*)

JOFFROY.

I'm sure
He'll bring her here.—A glorious day!
The boat is gliding through a sea of pink!
Oh! when Bertrand has promised, he achieves!

BRUNO.

She'll come!

FRANCOIS.

We'll see her soon.

PEGOFAT.

Right here, on board.

TROBALDO.

Among us all.

(The voice of Bertrand in the distance).

Be cheerful. . . . Princess. . . . soon. . . .

JOFFROY.

The boat proceeds. How calm the water is!
I hear no more the creaking of the oars. . . .
Oh! leave me here. . . . I'll have no other place!
I'll speak no more. I'm looking—and I wait!

CURTAIN.

END OF ACT I.

ACT II.

A beautiful palace-hall, half romance, half oriental. In the rear, a very wide glazed door opening upon terraces, beyond which the sea is seen blending with the sky. To the right, second entrance, a large open door shows a long retreating gallery, with airy colonnades and playing fountains. To the left, a stairway of porphyry descends from a heavy golden door. The marble floor is of snowy whiteness; it and the stairs are strewn with freshly cut lilies. A divan with many cushions. On the wall, by the door, hangs an enormous battle-axe, the handle of which is enamelled and set with green gems.

SCENE I.

THE PILGRIMS.

As the curtain rises, the large glazed opening in the rear is closed. A group of pilgrims, in coarse dress covered with shells, holding each a staff and long green palms, is stationed in front. These pilgrims speak in hushed tones, as if intimidated and dazzled by what they see.

FIRST PILGRIM.

*The Lady who received us stays away.

SECOND PILGRIM.

And all's so purely still that you can hear
The crunching of these lilies under foot.

THIRD PILGRIM.

Hush! Listen! It's a fountain whispering.

FOURTH PILGRIM.

Just where I am, is not quite clear to me.
We crossed how many halls?

FIRST PILGRIM.

Some seven.

SECOND PILGRIM.

Yes.

And there we saw some strange mosaic work!

THIRD PILGRIM.

And aviaries alive with golden birds!

FOURTH PILGRIM.

And carpets, cloths and cushions wonderful!

SECOND PILGRIM (*to third*).

You noticed that colossal man?

THIRD PILGRIM.

The one

Who sharply stared us out of face? I did!

FIRST PILGRIM.

Be silent! 'Tis the Knight-Whose-Arms-Are-Green!
The strange adventurer. . . .

(At this moment a tall knight, clad in green enamelled armor, passes through the gallery.)

SECOND PILGRIM (*to first, aside, touching him with his elbow*).

Be still! He's here!

THIRD PILGRIM (*in low tone, looking askant at the knight*).

His helmet bears a gird of peridots. . . .

FOURTH PILGRIM.

The pommel of his sword's an emerald!
(The knight disappears.)

SECOND PILGRIM *(shuddering)*.

I do not like this phantom prowling so! . . .

FIRST PILGRIM *(resuming his narrative)*.

Adventurer superb and cruel, who
 Is here to represent the Emperor
 Bethrothèd to the Princess. . . .

SECOND PILGRIM.

She's to wed

The Emp'ror Manuel?

FIRST PILGRIM.

He's jealous, and
 He knows his marriage is a state affair.
 The Cæsar in Byzantium fears attempts
 Upon the heart of the Most Beautiful;
 And so, for him, this knight is mounting guard,
 Preventing the approach of any youths,
 Unless. . . .

THIRD PILGRIM.

I'm young.

FIRST PILGRIM.

Unless they're homely ones!

FOURTH PILGRIM.

His strength appears surprising. . . .

FIRST PILGRIM.

Terrible!

(showing the battle-ax hanging on the wall).
 There's no one who can lift his battle-ax.

SECOND PILGRIM.

So, then, that sprightly youth upon the shore

Who jumped from out his boat, and whom we saw,
The one who bade some Genoese and Moors
Conduct him to the Princess,—runs a risk?

THIRD PILGRIM.

He cried aloud that Beelzebub himself
Could not prevent his seeing her at once.
—He had the look of one who'll persevere!

(For the last few moments, the knight has been standing in the doorway of the gallery. On hearing the last words, he makes a gesture and rapidly moves away. The noise of his armour causes the pilgrims to turn around.)

FIRST PILGRIM.

He overheard us!

SECOND PILGRIM.

He'll give orders now
To turn away that handsome youth. . . .

FIRST PILGRIM *(to second)*.

Old fool!

You spoke too much!

THIRD PILGRIM.

Oh! never mind! The youth
Stopped on the way, to put his armour on,
Assisted by that Genoese. No fear!
Old Squarciafico's shrewd, and he will know
The peril and how best to ward it off.
He'd like to have a candidate against
The Emperor he hates. . . . for reasons too.

FIRST PILGRIM.

Be still! I hear the viola and the lute,
The Lady who received us comes.—Be still!

SCENE II.

The Same. SORISMONDE, then MELISSINDE.

SORISMONDE (*appearing at the head of the stairs, before the closed golden door*).

O pilgrims who retrace your steps to France,
The Princess knows through me your presence here;
She knows that, coming from the Orient,
You wish to see her ere you leave for home!

FIRST PILGRIM.

So that her grace refresh our wandering!

SORISMONDE.

The Princess heard not with indifference
That you had come so far for sake of her,
And, generous,—she's willing to be seen.
I left her now attending early mass. . . .

(*Sound of a bell.*)

But mass is over, and she comes.

A HERALD.

The Princess!

(*The golden door opens. Melissinde appears, in heavy cope loaded with precious stones of all descriptions. On her forehead is a braid of pearls. Around her several children bearing bunches of lilies.*)

FIRST PILGRIM.

'Tis she!

SECOND PILGRIM.

How pure her unexpected grace!

THIRD PILGRIM.

Oh! mark her 'mid the lilies and the pearls!

FOURTH PILGRIM.

The tales we've heard of her are true indeed!
She pales the lilies and the Indic pearls!

FIRST PILGRIM.

Like Helen, when the aged men conversed!

MELISSINDE (*from head of the stairs*).

So you'll see France again, O happy folk!
 And soon, before your galley, will appear,
 Advancing through an azure fog, Provence!
 I envy you!—Alas! I'm like a plant
 That grows beneath a sky that's strange to it,
 And, feeling that afar's the motherland,
 Appears to bloom, although it knows its blight!

(*She descends a few steps.*)

And soon you'll see your native land arise!
 —My life's the love of one who never knew,
 One who regrets, with recollection none. . . .

(*She comes down from the last step and advances toward the pilgrims.*)

Already, as good Christians leaving should,
 You each have culled the Palm.

(*taking lilies from the hands of the children*).

Accept you each

And bear besides a lily frail and sweet,
 And keep this lily as a relic pure,
 So you remember oft this foreign France!

(*She distributes the lilies.*)

A PILGRIM.

The Palm will tell of rugged roads we trod;
 The Lily'll speak your beauty, blessèd rest!

SECOND PILGRIM.

The Palm will be a trophy stern and proud;
 The Lily, oh! the smile a fairy shed!

THIRD PILGRIM.

Farewell, O Princess, fairest Lily thou!

FOURTH PILGRIM.

A Lily thou of grace and slenderness.

(*The pilgrims go up by degrees.*)

MELISSINDE.

Farewell!

(The pilgrims retire. They are heard passing by the open window, toward which Melissinde directs her steps. The children place upon the table the lilies that are left, and they strew the floor with new flowers to replace those that the pilgrims' feet have scattered.)

VOICES OF THE PILGRIMS *(passing beneath the window).*

Rejoice! Rejoice!

(Melissinde waves an adieu, closes the window, and comes down. The children retire.)

SCENE III.

MELISSINDE, SORISMONDE.

SORISMONDE.

So affable

And condescending so! You were divine,
And kind more prettily than ever seen!

MELISSINDE.

You know full well I'm kind because I'm dull.

(She nervously loosens her mantle.)

O mantle broidered, gemmate, loading me
With ruby, sardonyx and idocrase,
With jasper, beryl and with hessonite,
With pebbles vain and shining nothingness,
O mantle, weight that crushest me to death,
O gorgeous mantle, thou art cover for
Another that I bear; although unseen,
It drags me down,

(She allows her mantle to glide off her shoulders to the floor.)

e'en when th'art cast away!

(She appears in a close white gown. Sorismonde picks up the mantle. Melissinde hands her her crown.)

Remove my pearls and all this vain disguise.

At last!

(She takes a few lilies from the table and places them around her head.)

And now I'm crowned as I prefer,
With flowers still enriched with nightly pearls.

(throwing herself upon a settee).

Oh! yes, you know I'm kind because I'm dull!

(Silence.)

But is it being bored that makes me kind?

Oh! no, it is through interest I gave

Those pilgrims lilies in a winning way.

SORISMONDE.

For what return, I pray, dear Princess?

MELISSINDE.

Songs!

It is because these humble people sang
That I'm to-day the dearest of the dear,
The Lady of Rudel the Troubadour,
The object of a love miraculous!
This poet mine, who lives away in France,
Began to love me for a random song;
And well you know the welcome heart that's lone
Reserves to love that fame has brought to us!
The common-place that binds us down to earth
X Has made me thirst for love's sublimity!

(pointing toward the window).

These pilgrims, think! will wander over France,
And they will say of me, my eyes, my brow,
Poetic things that lead the youths to dream. . . .

SORISMONDE.

And then Rudel will know of it. I see!

MELISSINDE.

Perhaps, indeed, Rudel will hear of it.
 X An easy manner for a distant soul
 To reach, beyond the vastness of the sea,
 A sympathetic soul.

SORISMONDE.

A manner chaste!

MELISSINDE.

No doubt. I would exalt in him the pride
 Of thus adoring me. And that is why
 I hailed these people thus. No kindness great,
 But simply care to keep my legend bright!

SORISMONDE.

Again you're captured by this empty dream.
 For me, I'd love Rudel, but have him come!

MELISSINDE.

I love his love, I love his soul, I love. . . .

SORISMONDE.

You know not whom. If by some artifice,
 A sorcerer's, or through some magic ring,
 You could from here see what his face is like. . . .

MELISSINDE.

You wish what's too distinct. . . .

SORISMONDE.

And you too vague.

Among your rings why not a magic one?
 But you prefer sweet wanderings of thought.

MELISSINDE.

Yes, in my gardens that are moonly pale,
 I hear the breeze among the myrtles sigh. . . .
 I sail along the green and placid lake
 In which my galley, rich in ornaments,

Sheds rippling streams of flowers, or of light.
 And, as the lute resounds by plectra wooed,
 I send on wings the verses I recite.
 Then, in this palace seeking solitude,
 I'm saddened,—and my sadness has its worth!—
 Or else I wander here where lilies scent;
 And dream, then oping wide its labyrinth,
 Compels me to desert reality;
 And reason slumbers, as, unceasingly,
 Unceasing fountains softly spout and splash!

SORISMONDE.

We need, indeed, some spurs and helmets here,
 We need, in fact, a host of brilliant knights!
 But what? Your jailer keeps them off! You laugh?
 The man, whate'er he says, is mounting guard
 As would a demon by a treasure placed!
 Since he is here no stranger's been within.

MELISSINDE (*laughing*).

He's here to guard, and not to scare the crows!

SORISMONDE.

The Emp'ror's jealous. . . .

MELISSINDE (*shrugging her shoulders*).

If he cares at all.

SORISMONDE (*sitting on a cushion, at Melissinde's feet*).
 So, really, you will marry this Comnenus?

MELISSINDE.

Why not? A husband's not a lover.

SORISMONDE.

But

He bores you.

MELISSINDE.

Yes, imperially so!

SORISMONDE.

He cannot understand you. . . .

MELISSINDE.

Sorismonde,

To no man am I more illegible. . . .

He'll surely be the husband I should have.

One day I said how sad I felt; he laughed!

Like others, I shall find some pleasure in

The irony of moral distances! . . .

I'll marry Manuel, and so be free

To have a lover immaterial.

SORISMONDE.

But then suppose, some day, a love that's true

Should storm your heart, and play the glutton there?

MELISSINDE.

My friend invisible protects me. No!

SORISMONDE.

No angel, but a guardian-lover, then?

MELISSINDE.

From him I feel, at eve, along the beach,

A flight of thoughts that reach me on the wing;

And then I give the gentle zephyr thanks!

SORISMONDE.

You owe this poet nothing.

MELISSINDE.

Yes, I do!

My pride, my longings and my scruples too;

My glow at heart, my taste for eventide,

My pleasing shudders and my soothing tears,

The noble, anxious thoughts invading me.

* I owe to him the whiteness of my robes,

I owe to him, in short, my soul, perhaps.

SORISMONDE (*shaking her head*).

And 'tis for this you give so many thanks ?
I hate this love. . . .

MELISSINDE.

And so do I, at times.

(*She rises.*)

The calm's too deep. A storm is brewing. Ah !

(*Sorismonde attempts to remove the lilies from the table.*)

No, leave them here. I wish to keep a bunch !

SORISMONDE.

You live too much with lilies. They are white,
They're proud and pure. But, then, they enervate.

MELISSINDE.

You're right ; strange flowers they, and treacherous.
They look like angels' staffs, or thyrsi for
Resplendent seraphim. Their fragrance is
Too strong, indeed, and still too delicate.

(*She takes a bunch and looks at it.*)

You're right, no doubt. For evil flowers, they !
Their candour's apt to breed uneasiness.
Their lonely pride's a grievous counsellor,
And better far are sunlit roses' smiles.

(*smelling of the lilies.*)

This fragrance ! Oh ! What's in its subtle flow ?
Perversion lurks in such mysticity !

(*with affected frivolity.*)

But live we on, and while away the time !
I've called that Genoese. Yes, I expect
Sir Squarciafico ! Down to seeking joy
In things of vertu and in pallid silks ;
To wearing out a day on new designs,
Or languid shades, to deck my cushions with !

(*She has settled among the cushions.*)

SORISMONDE.

Your Genoese amuses you with these,

While you are so distraught you notice none
 Of his extortions; how he plays his game
 For self and brother traders, day by day!
 Oh! artist princes are a boon to thieves!
 And so your tradesmen now are feeling sad
 To lose you, Princess daft on stirring verse,
 Whose eyes are closed, but fingers open wide!
 They favour not your coming marriage, for
 They know the master that Comnenus is!

A WOMAN (*entering*).

The Knight-Whose-Arms-Are-Green is waiting here.
 He asks permission to. . . .

MELISSINDE (*shrugging her shoulders*).

He has it, say.

SCENE IV.

MELISSINDE, SORISMONDE, *the* KNIGHT-WHOSE-ARMS-
 ARE-GREEN.

THE KNIGHT (*he seems concerned and casts frequent
 glances toward the gallery and the window*).

Your pardon, Princess, if I'm late to-day
 In seeking orders.—God be with you!

MELISSINDE (*smiling*).

Thanks!

But what is with me most, methinks, is you!

THE KNIGHT.

Oh! Madam!

MELISSINDE.

You deny your guardianship!
 My orders? Well, perhaps I'll take a sail.

THE KNIGHT.

'Tis good.

MELISSINDE.

My galley has its flowers and
Musicians too?

THE KNIGHT (*with great courtesy*).

It's never unprepared.

MELISSINDE (*rising*).

Suppose we go immediately?

(*to Sorismonde*).

Go fetch

A veil. . . .

THE KNIGHT (*eagerly*).

Oh! not this moment.

(*movement on the part of Melissinde*).

Madam, please!

I'm truly grieved to interfere. I must,
And now I do request you to postpone. . . .

MELISSINDE.

What say you now?

THE KNIGHT.

Not long; until to-night.

MELISSINDE.

And so 'twas true?

THE KNIGHT.

I'm but the servant of
The Emperor, to whom I'm bound by oath.
To-day I must be vigilant.

MELISSINDE (*eagerly*).

And why?

THE KNIGHT.

I've placed my men-at-arms—forgive me, please—
Around this palace. Here is door the last,
And that guard I.

MELISSINDE.

Then I'm a prisoner!

SORISMONDE (*looking out of the window*).

I see around a host of slaves in arms!

MELISSINDE.

My servants?

THE KNIGHT.

Now are under lock and key.

(*pointing to the gallery*).

Moreover, Princess, since I'm watching here,
You could not send them word.

MELISSINDE.

A grand exploit!

I'm an enchanted princess now, it seems!

It's getting quite amusing, Sorismonde.

Just think, my dear! We're living a romance!

—But what has happened? Why?

THE KNIGHT (*bowing*).

I must not say!

(*He goes up a little, and, on the point of retiring, stops.*)

You know that tradesman, money lender's here;

That Genoese, more Jewish than a Jew. . . .

MELISSINDE.

Oh! Squarciafico?

THE KNIGHT.

Yes. I'll authorize

His showing you his goods, if you desire.

MELISSINDE.

Indeed! You condescend not to forbid

My letting in dear Squarciafico! Thanks!

THE KNIGHT.

Receive him then, dear Madam—while I'm here.

(*exit*).

SORISMONDE.

A pleasant thing to be an Emp'ror's bride!

MELISSINDE.

But what has happened?

SCENE V.

MELISSINDE, SORISMONDE, SQUARCIAFICO, *followed by his valet*, NICHOLOSE, *who carries in a bale of goods*, *the KNIGHT-WHOSE-ARMS-ARE-GREEN, with folded arms, on the threshold.*

SQUARCIAFICO (*obsequious, nimble, voluble, and slyly keeping his eye on the Knight*).

Ever beautiful!

The very smile of Love itself is her's!

(to his valet, who is opening the bale of goods).

Yes, Nicholose, you may spread out the goods. . . .

(to Melissinde, with a bow).

You'll see a host of things quite unsurpassed !

MELISSINDE.

Your wealth is growing, then!

SQUARCIAFICO.

O saints! I'm poor!

MELISSINDE.

'Tis false! You're rich, like all our Genoese!

O you who seek your gains in Palestine,

Bear not the Cross, but sequins on your breast!

'Tis wealth you'd snatch from the Crusade. For shame!

SQUARCIAFICO.

The glory's for the Franks!

MELISSINDE.

The profit yours!

SQUARCIAFICO.

Not so! We lose, although we're favoured by
Saint George! Tolls ev'rywhere. Our very blood!
They've shorn us of the ovens and the mills!

(coaxingly).

We'll get them back?

MELISSINDE.

We'll see.

SQUARCIAFICO *(pointing to some bags).*

These bags are full

Of exquisite perfumes!

(unrolling some rugs).

See! Persian rugs!

At Ascalon they succor trade, and there

We get each year one hundred gold besants.

(coaxingly).

That's handsome! Do the same for Tripoli!

MELISSINDE.

We'll see!

SQUARCIAFICO *(presenting a casket).*

You like this casket?

MELISSINDE.

Yes, I do.

SQUARCIAFICO *(on his knees undoing his goods).*

A Moussoul golden cloth! Gulf pearls, and myrrh
From Araby! Here's Afric's ivory!

(in low tone).

Be silent! I shall whisper soon. Then list!

(Movement by Melissinde.—Aloud).

Brocade!

(in low tone).

A youth is roaming. . . .

(aloud, puffing and turning the stuff).

Quiet shades!

(in low tone).

Around the palace.

MELISSINDE *(aside).*

Understood!

SQUARCIAFICO *(aloud).*

Some spice!

(aside).

He's kept without,

(aloud).

Some amber?—Smell it, please!

(aside).

He seeks to speak to you.

(aloud).

Some Tyre silks!

MELISSINDE *(low tone).*

No name?

SQUARCIAFICO *(low tone).*

No. He's a poet, I believe.

MELISSINDE *(with an outcry quickly repressed).*

Ah! Ah! This scarlet, what a feast to see!

SQUARCIAFICO *(low tone).*

You can invent no way to let him in?

MELISSINDE *(low tone).*

Not one!

SQUARCIAFICO *(aloud).*

Egyptian linen, fine and soft?

MELISSINDE *(low tone).*

He comes from. . . .

SQUARCIAFICO (*low tone*).

France, and has just landed now.
He looks the Grecian shepherd and the king!
—But will this spy, this jailer never go?

(*aloud*).

Some spices here from Kiss-Ben-Omira!

MELISSINDE (*low tone*).

He'll not. He stays, as fable dragons do!

SQUARCIAFICO (*aloud*).

Some incense from the king of Axumites.
(*low tone*).

The case is, said the youth, a pressing one.
To see you, he would fight a hundred men!

MELISSINDE (*low tone*).

Well then?

SQUARCIAFICO (*aloud*).

Some calamus?

(*low tone*).

He'll blow his horn,

And if he's not admitted, he will storm
The place!

(*aloud*).

Arabian balm, all-powerful!

On any wound, it stops the bleeding short!

(*rising and offering her a small bag*).

And from Provence, a treat for gentle teeth
To crush, here are some golden hazel-nuts!

MELISSINDE.

I'm satisfied and buy the lot. Begone!

(*aside*).

It seems as if his horn were blowing now!

SQUARCIAFICO (*folding up his goods*).

I'll shortly have some other things to show.

(*Melissinde, by a gesture, shows impatience.*)

I'm going!

(coaxingly).

And you'll do away with tolls?

MELISSINDE.

No doubt!

SQUARCIAFICO *(low tone).*

Another Paris! Dazzled I!

(aloud, coaxingly).

The subsidy? You'll grant it to us?

MELISSINDE.

Yes!

SQUARCIAFICO *(speaking to himself).*

I think I've been what we may call astute
In linking thus my lot to this young man's.

Ha, ha! this may not suit Sir Manuel!

(turning on the threshold and bowing gracefully).

One hundred gold besants a year is good!

(Exit.—The Knight follows him out.)

SCENE VI.

MELISSINDE, SORISMONDE, *then the* KNIGHT - WHOSE - ARMS -
ARE - GREEN.

MELISSINDE *(to Sorismonde).*

You heard the tale?

(Sorismonde makes an affirmative sign.)

This youth! This poet!

SORISMONDE.

Yes!

You seem disturbed a bit.

MELISSINDE.

Disturbèd, I?

Why, no!

SORISMONDE (*archly*).

Are feelings with you dull as once?

MELISSINDE (*throwing herself upon a sofa*).

Why not? Speak not so lightly!

(*Horn heard in the distance*).

There's the horn!

SORISMONDE (*at the window*).

It's he! He sounds the horn to say he comes.

MELISSINDE (*reclining, with indifference*).

What matters?

SORISMONDE.

But his looks are passing good!

MELISSINDE (*shrugging her shoulders*).

How can you see so far?

SORISMONDE.

I see him well.

He calls; and men-of-arms are coming out.

He's reached the gate!

MELISSINDE.

It's no concern of mine!

(*silence*).

Well, after all, how fares he at the gate?

SORISMONDE.

The soldiers stop him there.

MELISSINDE.

Defenseless child!

He turns?

SORISMONDE.

Oh! no, he fights.

MELISSINDE (*rising on her elbow*).

What! Can it be?

SORISMONDE

He strikes them down! He passes! Virgin! Saints!
He's now before the second of the doors!
He fights!

MELISSINDE (*moving to rise*).

Indeed!

SORISMONDE.

Oh! what a dash is his!
(*The horn sounds closer.*)
You hear him sound his horn!

MELISSINDE (*on her feet*).

Like Roland, then.

SORISMONDE.

He'll pass.

MELISSINDE (*at the window behind Sorismonde*).

He passes!

SORISMONDE.

Now he falls!

MELISSINDE.

He's up!

SORISMONDE.

His lance is broken!

MELISSINDE.

But he draws his sword!

Oh! God!

(She falls back.)

SORISMONDE.

What now?

MELISSINDE.

His eyes! I caught his eyes!
Just now he raised them, and he saw me!

SORISMONDE.

Good!

As in a tournament, your sleeve to him!

MELISSINDE (*mounting on the window-sill, tearing off her sleeve and holding it aloft*).

Strike hard, brave Knight! Here is my sleeve of white!

I order you to change its colour here!

Your blood be spared! Make theirs in rivers run!

You have my silver samite, pure as snow,

Now dye it red, and bring it me!

(She throws her sleeve.)

THE VOICE OF BERTRAND.

I shall!

*(tumult, clash, then silence).*MELISSINDE (*coming down*).

He's hewed his way within!

(Sorismonde closes the window. Silence.)

All noise has ceased. . . .

All still. . . . What sought he here?

SORISMONDE (*pointing to the gallery*).

Oh! look!

(A slave enters from the gallery, covered with blood, sword in hand, his clothes in shreds. He speaks to the Knight.)

THE KNIGHT.

'Tis well!

(He takes his battle-axe, and, with tranquil courtesy, turns to Melissinde.)

By your permission, I will close the door.

(He closes the door. The pushing of bolts is heard. Silence.)

MELISSINDE.

What are we to expect? Oh! breathless fear!

(A noise, growing nearer, is heard in the palace.)

He comes!—The Knight-Whose-Arms-Are-Green is there,
And he will kill him with that axe he has!—
A child like him could never fell the brute!—

(Noise behind the door. Clash).

They've met! How long it lasts! They
struggle on!
Now shuffling feet!

(Dead sound).

A fall!

(Silence. The door opens. She backs.)

. . . . Now open doors!

*(Bertrand appears in the doorway, sword in hand,
wounded on the forehead. He throws at the feet of Melis-
sinde her sleeve now soaked in blood.)*

MELISSINDE *(still backing).*

Sir Knight! What would you say to me?

BERTRAND.

Some verse!

SCENE VII.

MELISSINDE, BERTRAND, SORISMONDE.

BERTRAND *(bending the knee).*

'Tis matter commonplace

To be attentive to

An auburn, dark, or fair

Mistress,

When auburn, fair, or dark

Is captured easily. . . .

—I love the far-away

Princess!

'Tis matter plain enough

To be a lover true,

If one may kiss Her train
 Each day,
 Mayhap to find and press
 A hand that's nothing loth. . . .
 —I love the Princess Far-
 Away!

MELISSINDE (*continuing*).

But 'tis a thing supreme
 To love, though not beloved,
 With love profound and brave,
 Ceaseless,
 With love uncertain that's
 More noble being vain. . . .
 —I love the far-away
 Princess!

For 'tis a thing divine
 To love as fancy bids,
 When we imagine, dream,
 Or may. . . .
 Then dream is all to us.
 What's life without a dream?
 —I love the Princess Far-
 Away!

BERTRAND.

You've heard the lines?

MELISSINDE.

Through minstrel more than one.

BERTRAND.

You know who wrote them?

MELISSINDE.

Yes, Joffroy Rudel.

BERTRAND.

His love so strange has touched you then, perhaps?

MELISSINDE.

Oh! speak of him! You've chosen well the time!

BERTRAND.

You know the faithfulness and fervent zeal
That mark his love?

MELISSINDE.

I love his love. And oft,
As gently broke the wave upon the sand,
I've heard in it the voice of love that's true;
And, as the shades of eve succeeded light,
* I've felt in me the soul of such a love!

BERTRAND (*faintly*).

O bliss!

MELISSINDE (*leaning down over him*).

You're happy?

BERTRAND.

Very happy. Yes!

For he. . . . But strength is leaving me. . . .

MELISSINDE.

He faints,

Help, Sorismonde!

SORISMONDE (*running up to her*).

Yes, Princess! Lay him here.
(*They lay him on some cushions.*)

MELISSINDE (*distracted*).

Run! Haste! Some water! Get the ewer! Quick!

SORISMONDE (*on her knees by Melissinde and Bertrand, holding the ewer*).

How pale! He looks like an Olympian god!

MELISSINDE.

His forehead bleeds.—A cloth!

(*She tears off the muslin that protects her throat.*)

SORISMONDE.

Your neckerchief!

MELISSINDE.

His heart is beating 'neath the ciclaton!
 —Balm Arabic! Be quick! It's powerful!
 Oh! gently! See, he's going to revive!
 —Beware you soil his ermine, his pelisse!—
 Be careful! His revival must be slow.
 His hair! 'Tis thus they wear it in Provence.—
 Now's a return of colour to his cheek;
 He breathes! His eyelids and his lips have moved;
 He gently pressed my hand!

SORISMONDE.

He's better, much!

MELISSINDE.

His eyes have moved! And now he opes them wide!

BERTRAND (*opening his eyes and seeing her*).

I dream! I'm Flor, and sweet Blanchèfleur is she!
 Or else my wound has been a mortal one,
 And I am now awake in paradise.

MELISSINDE.

Oh! Sorismonde!

SORISMONDE.

He's better, I repeat.

BERTRAND (*his head on the sleeveless arm of Melissinde*).

I cannot recollect. . . . I'm still so faint. . . .
 This arm against my cheek. . . .

(*Movement of Melissinde*).

Oh! leave it!

MELISSINDE.

Yes!

BERTRAND.

Oh! burning coolness of this arm unknown,
This arm so sweetly bare!

MELISSINDE (*eagerly withdrawing her arm*).

'Tis true, it's bare!

BERTRAND (*rising, to Melissinde*).

Who can you be?

MELISSINDE.

Do you forget, Sir Knight?
The one to whom you came with news to give.
But suddenly you fell and fainted here!

BERTRAND (*falling back*).

Oh! No! You're not the Princess?

MELISSINDE (*smiling*).

Yes, I am!

BERTRAND.

If you! . . . but then! . . . the Princess! . . . —Cruel fate!
And I! . . . Great God! . . . Make haste, the hour flies,
It flies! . . .

(*He tries to get up, and staggers.*)

The window. . . . look, for I cannot!

(*Melissinde opens the rear window.*)

What see you?

MELISSINDE.

Flowers and a terrace.

BERTRAND.

Then?

MELISSINDE.

The sea.

BERTRAND.

And on the sea,—oh! God, I faint!—
And on the sea you find a galley? Look!

MELISSINDE.

A small and clumsy craft that's distant, yes,
At anchor,—and arrived since yester eve!

BERTRAND.

It's ours! And at the peak?

MELISSINDE.

Some swallows rest.

BERTRAND.

And on the yard no sail that's black?

MELISSINDE.

Some wings,
Some halcyon wings of purest white!

BERTRAND.

In time!

Oh! Madam, haste!—Now, Virgin, hear me! Pray,
Prolong his life, so that he leave the world
But after seeing her! He'll die content!

MELISSINDE.

See, Sorismonde, his eyes are full of tears!

BERTRAND.

He'll die content!—All flowers' flower she,
The star of stars! And dream itself will be
Outstripped! And every pang of grief endured,
All bitter thoughts will vanish with the past,
When he shall see the light upon her brow,
And contemplate, as quivers lash of gold,
Her eyes of grey, of blue and violet!
I see the one he never saw but loved,
And, oh! I feel he, too, must see her—must!
—Alas! We dare not even bear him here!
Come; be a vision to this moribund
Whose dying moments will be heavenly,

If on such beauty he may close his eyes!
Do not withdraw in haughtiness as now!
Be not again the Princess Far-Away!
Come, Princess with a name mellifluous,
So he shall know in life what heaven is,
So he shall have, upon his sorry craft,
The sweetest and the most desired death!

MELISSINDE (*who has been falling back each time he was advancing*).

You speak of whom?

BERTRAND.

Of this Joffroy Rudel
Whose dying moment has arrived,—of him
Whose love you said you loved. He breathes his last!
Make haste! I promised!

MELISSINDE.

But. . . . but you, Sir Knight,
Who are you then?

BERTRAND.

Bertrand d' Allamanon,
His brother, friend. . . . Come on then quickly!

MELISSINDE.

No!

CURTAIN.

END OF ACT II.

ACT III.

Same set as in Act II. In the rear, the wide window is open. Scorching afternoon. The marble floor is strewn no more with lilies, but with red roses.

SCENE I.

BERTRAND, SORISMONDE.

SORISMONDE.

I said, cost what it might, you'd speak to her.
She hesitates. She'll see you. She may not.
Be hopeful!

BERTRAND.

Time is pressing!

SORISMONDE (*moving her head in doubt, and going up to the window*).

A romance!

(*She looks out.*)

BERTRAND (*with suppressed voice*).

The sail?

SORISMONDE,

Is white as ever on the mast.

—Now, on the port, as if in grief profound,
The servants of the Knight-Whose-Arms-Are-Green
Are taking their departure. And their ship,
With heavy oars, is cleaving through the sea.

Oh! when Byzantium sees this galley come
 With dismal freight, this vanquished, lifeless Knight,
 And when his janissaries tell the tale,
 The Emp'ror's wrath will be most violent!

BERTRAND (*lost in a dream*).

How stern became at once her eyes so soft!
 So hasty her refusal, why?

(*to Sorismonde*).
 Say why!

SORISMONDE (*evasively*).

Who knows?

BERTRAND.

But why refuse?

SORISMONDE (*seeing the golden door open*).

She comes!

BERTRAND.

Be kind,

And say to her. . . .

SORISMONDE (*leading him out*).

Stay in this gallery.

(*Melissinde appears ; slowly and sighing, she descends
 the stairs.*)

SCENE II.

MELISSINDE, SORISMONDE.

MELISSINDE.

Come, Sorismonde, and listen to me, dear. . . .
 I wonder how you judge what's taken place.

SORISMONDE (*evasively*).

Oh! well. . . .

MELISSINDE.

My anger and refusal, why?
Some coming storm unnerved me, I suppose.
But I have burned a candle and I've prayed.
Was there a reason for refusing thus?
Did I appear to act ill-humouredly,
Or else as if some disappointment, . . . No!
There really was no reason. Am I right?

SORISMONDE.

You know there was a reason.

MELISSINDE (*frightened*).

Lower, please!

SORISMONDE (*smiling, after a short silence*).

Be not alarmed, for what I mean is this:
You almost dread, instinctively, to see
The one you loved in a resplendent dream
Now lowered to a sad reality,
With wildly searching eyes, with bluish lips,
And shrivelled hands that fever burns and wets.
You would retain, for all the days to come,
A nobler picture of a nobler love,
By seeing not the poet in his shroud.

MELISSINDE (*eagerly*).

Oh! thanks!—That is the reason, only that!
And that is why I answered strangely: No!
—You may admit Sir Knight d' Allamanon.

SORISMONDE (*smiling*).

What for, since you refuse?

MELISSINDE.

I do refuse. . . .

My soul upbraids me though for cowardice,
And I would give this dying man the joy
Of knowing that Bertrand has done his best.

SORISMONDE.

Your duty's such.

MELISSINDE.

He may arouse me from
My selfish dream, perhaps, . . .if he insists.

*(Sorismonde goes to the gallery and makes a sign.—
Bertrand appears. Sorismonde withdraws.)*

SCENE III.

BERTRAND, MELISSINDE.

BERTRAND.

For this be thanked! I see you once again!
Insist, and still insist I must and shall:
The sail is white, Joffroy Rudel's alive!

MELISSINDE *(seated among the cushions, languidly)*.
Perhaps he's not so ill as you were told.

BERTRAND.

Oh! speak not thus! This hour's granted me
So that I may convince your heart.

MELISSINDE.

Then plead!

BERTRAND.

This morning, here, I was transfixed and dumb! . . .
The dazzling vision fled so rapidly,
It flung at me so wickedly that : "No!"—
Though kind and gentle with me otherwise—
That all might well have seemed a cheating dream,
If through the air a penetrating scent,
Effusion of the tissues that you wear,
A fragrance such as Cleopatra left,
Perfuming Eastern cities as she passed,
Had not remained in floating subtlety.

MELISSINDE (*smiling, holding out her wrist on which hang some small jewelled scent-boxes*).

The perfume that you mean must be no doubt
The scent of amber and of sandal-wood
Contained in golden trinkets that I wear,
You see, upon my arm.

(*Bertrand kneels and kisses her hand.*)

Is this it?—Say!

BERTRAND (*whose voice shows that he is moved*).

It is, but made more heavenly by you.

MELISSINDE (*as he is about to rise*).

Since you implore, remain with bended knee.

BERTRAND (*on his knees*).

Oh! how can I, so mean, describe Rudel?
* This spirit gentle, wide, this tender soul,
This love for you, this marvellous romance!
Am I of these, to you, fit spokesman?

MELISSINDE.

Speak!

—You love him?

BERTRAND.

I revere and love him, yes.
When he arrived among us, pale and wan,
His end approaching, doctors said, and when
I knew that, sailing t'ward a certain death,
This dying lover of a queen unknown
Sought nothing but to see her ere he died,
A sudden admiration fired me.
I went to him.

MELISSINDE (*eagerly*).

And quickly won his heart?

BERTRAND.

At once I loved him and espoused his dream,
Became his pupil, friend and brother, too.
Though disapproved by all—misunderstood—
I followed him. . . .

MELISSINDE.

Oh! that was really well!

BERTRAND.

The sea to us, at first, was motherly,
And while t'ward you we gently glided on,
From rosy morn to tawny setting sun,
He'd hear me speak the verse he wrote for you.

MELISSINDE.

Of course you spoke it well! Your voice is rich!

BERTRAND.

No doubt that Roland loved his beauty Aude,
Tristan Iseult, and Flor his Blanchèfleur;
But, oh! Rudel loved more his Melissinde!
He carried love beyond the verge extreme!
Oh! would you knew his tears, and prayers, and fears,
When nightly I was watching by his side!

MELISSINDE.

'Twas ever you who watched him through the night?

BERTRAND (*standing, lyrically*).

Can I describe the strife, O woman, of
This dying man toward a smile of yours?
But storms arose; the galley laboured so
That we despaired of ever reaching port.
Our cockle-shell was battered by the waves
Till it was like the one Ulysses had.
But, strong in faith, the dying poet lived,
His dream and mine becoming that of all!
At times a lull. Some land would tempt us then,

An island smiling and inviting us.
 We'd wish to go ashore for flowers there,
 But he'd refuse, and onward 'gainst the winds
 We'd start again. Then sudden calms would fall
 And make us row. A Turkish galley next
 Was met, and fought, and sunk. And on we rowed!
 We had more ills in store, for hunger came;
 The looks of all aboard were spectre-like.
 Our masts were trunks, and fringes our sails.
 No hope! Rudel was doomed!—A-sudden: Land!

MELISSINDE (*shuddering*).

Oh! when I think these perils great were thine! ¹

BERTRAND (*surprised*).

What! mine?

MELISSINDE (*eagerly, endeavouring to reclaim her words*).

Yes, thine, for him! Oh! let me note
 Thy merit, and for him be grateful here!

BERTRAND.

O, Princess!

MELISSINDE.

Why be modest to a point
 That thou will'st not allow thy heart to speak?
 Thou wert a loyal knight, a trusty friend. . . .
 I'll order now my galley to be manned. . . .
 I come. . . . I come. . . .

(*Movement by Bertrand.*)

But not another word!

(*She vanishes much disturbed.*)

¹ See Note, Page 77.

SCENE IV.

BERTRAND, *the* SQUARCIAFICO.

BERTRAND.

She's coming!—Her refusal was a game!
And is it that, e'en with the dying, they
Must ever prove how feminine they are?
Or must they else, most cruel in their art,
Bring joy to moribunds with shrewd delay?
(*Turning toward the window*)

You wait her coming as an angel's there,
And you shall die content, Joffroy Rudel!

SQUARCIAFICO (*just entered*).

Then you are not Joffroy Rudel?

BERTRAND.

Not I!

SQUARCIAFICO.

The devil! Then my hopes have come to naught!

BERTRAND.

Your hopes?

SQUARCIAFICO.

Why yes. You landed young and strong,
And so I thought: 'tis he! Our fortune's made!

BERTRAND.

What fortune?

SQUARCIAFICO.

Fortune? Why! I thought: here comes
That poet who is crazed with love itself!
He looks the victor. He'll be sure to slay
That jailer, and he'll marry her he freed!

BERTRAND.

What's that?

SQUARCIAFICO.

'Twas perfect so. For Manuel
 Detests Venetians all and Genoese.
 His rule established here would ruin us!
 What ask we, though, but peace and naught for us;
 To let the city go as heretofore!
 A poet was the king that suited us!
 We each could have remained in our spheres!
 He with his verse, and with our traffic we!
 'Twas perfect! On the throne a loving pair
 Who could have been relieved of governing!
 They would not have, with zeal intemperate,
 Prevented us. . . .

BERTRAND.

From dragging many nets!

SQUARCIAFICO.

Well let me first explain!

BERTRAND.

I understand.

SQUARCIAFICO.

Rudel will die. His trip was useless then!

BERTRAND.

'Twas useless!—Noble strife of lofty soul,
 Thou shouldst have left a money gain!

SQUARCIAFICO.

Why, yes!

BERTRAND (*aside*).

Oh! humble mariners, you understood!
 But he, this venter, last among the last,
 With sordid brain, compressed and mercantile,
 Debased the thought and made it practical!
 However pure and grand may be a deed,
 There will be those to say: the profit's where?

How vile forever thus to count and smirch!
—Good father Trophime, would that you could hear!

SQUARCIAFICO.

To think that Manuel, whom I detest,
Will marry soon. . . .

BERTRAND (*eagerly*).

I warrant you he'll not!

SQUARCIAFICO (*aside*).

Hallo!

BERTRAND.

I swear that this barbarian
Shall not possess this creature frail and rare!

SQUARCIAFICO (*aside*).

He might consider still that plan of mine.
(*aloud*).

Unfortunate Rudel! Untimely death!

(*Bertrand, lost in thought, does not seem to hear.*

Squarciafico comes nearer.)

She would have married him; for poets, Franks,
She favoured both. And both was he—like you!—
This voyage too was of untold effect,
—And, by the way, you too accomplished it!—
He dies, though. Such is fate! So passeth man;
He reapeth ne'er the profit of his deeds.
He reacheth for the premium, and dies.
—Success has ever been the follower's.

BERTRAND.

That mast! Oh! what if it should now display
The deathly signal!

SQUARCIAFICO (*closer to him*).

Child! untutored child,
Who pleadeth for another—dead—and could
—So easily!—advantage one who lives!

BERTRAND (*turning, and looking at him. Squarciafico falls back.*)

You said?

SQUARCIAFICO.

Oh! nothing.

BERTRAND (*seizing him by the throat*).

Wretch!

SQUARCIAFICO (*freeing himself*).

It's beautiful
To see, young man, how you receive advice.

BERTRAND.

I'll crush you!

SCENE V.

The same. MELISSINDE, SORISMONDE, MELISSINDE'S *women-in-waiting bearing her mantel, her diadem and her sceptre.*

MELISSINDE.

What's occurred?

BERTRAND (*to Squarciafico*).

You serpent vile!

SQUARCIAFICO.

A serpent? Good! But crushing's dangerous!

BERTRAND.

I loathe the reptile that will sting the heel!

SQUARCIAFICO.

Perhaps what I will sting will be the heart!

MELISSINDE (*advancing with a quiver of anger*).

You threaten guest of mine, deceitful wretch!

Before to-morrow get you far away!

If you are found in Tripoli by morn,

You will be put to death upon a cross!

SQUARCIAFICO.

I'm banished! Ruined!

(*To Bertrand*).

You! Well, wait and see!

I'll be revenged!

(*going out*).

The Franks are ingrates, all!

MELISSINDE (*to Bertrand*).

You see, I banished him because of you.

BERTRAND.

This man had. . . .

MELISSINDE.

Yes. . . . had made your anger rise.

Sufficient that. We'll start a moment hence.

Be pleased to see if all is ready on

My galley. . . . Go. . . .

(*Bertrand looks at her a moment as if stunned, then abruptly leaves.*)

SCENE VI.

MELISSINDE, SORISMONDE, *the Women a moment.*

MELISSINDE (*nervously, to Sorismonde*).

Now give my diadem!

He's seen me not, and surely what he loves

In me's the Princess!—So, I'm bound to be

A princess with the sceptre in her hand!—

My sceptre now!—Alas! How weak I feel!

(*She tries to put on her mantel, but returns it to the women.*)

This heavy mantel's torture! Place it in

My galley. . . . Go! Be quick!—E'er heavier

These jewels and this gold, a growing weight!—
When I arrive, I'll wear the load again!

(Exeunt the woman with the insignia.—To Sorismonde.)

Shall I, you think, be forced to close his eyes?

SORISMONDE.

A task like this must surely try your nerves.
You'd better send a doctor and a priest!

MELISSINDE.

You settle things with unconcernedness!
And still I feel a dull reluctance to
Proceed t'ward one who's in the grasp of death,
Instead of keeping here the other, life!

SORISMONDE.

Then, Princess, cast away ties fanciful!
Remain, and grant its freedom to your soul!
You love the other one? . . . Well, what forbids?

MELISSINDE.

I love the other one! I show it. True!

SORISMONDE.

Why fear this love that should be joy to you?
You're quitting dream, and you re-enter life!

MELISSINDE.

The sister of the lilies, then, can love
The first who, young and manly, speaks to her!

SORISMONDE.

So nature, Princess, often claims her rights!

MELISSINDE.

Because she held a while his lifeless hands,
And gave them vigour with the warmth of hers! . . .

SORISMONDE.

And then because his brow's a noble one.

MELISSINDE.

Because his breath! Oh! no 'twas not for these!
 It was because I took him for. . . . I dare,
 How mad! endeavour to deceive myself,
 As if there were no love beguiling me!—
 Oh! when with tender voice he spoke the name
 Of him for whom I longed despairingly,
 My anxious heart by wish proclaimed the name
 And speaker one, and it believed its wish!

SORISMONDE.

Of course.

MELISSINDE.

Oh! once how glad I should have been
 To have my dreamer seek his princess here!
 And now he comes, the prince unfortunate,
 He comes, despite the perils of the way,
 And dies of it; while she for whom he calls
 With dying breath must doubt and hesitate,
 And, sorely grieved, endeavour to withdraw,
 Because he chose too well his messenger!

SORISMONDE.

Just so!

MELISSINDE.

He chose too well! You understand?—
 He's dark, but still at times his voice is fair;
 He's haughty, but within his fearless eye
 There lurks a look of shyness like a child's!
 —Oh! Love, how rapidly you felled my pride!

SORISMONDE.

You love him. Stay! For reason. . . .

MELISSINDE.

Stupid is!

For it accepts no facts but normal ones;
 What's right is faultless, evil's evil through.

Still are there mixtures not so limpid quite!
 And duplex hearts, yes, most distressingly!
 The one who was forever in my dreams,
 Who dies for me, I love and pity him;
 But I adore the other! And it seems
 As if, between the two, my soul were rent.

SORISMONDE.

Then why not go aboard, to show yourself?
 And afterward you can. . . .

MELISSINDE.

A compromise!

And that's what reason says! Unworthy craft!
 The issue that's implied is simply this:
 Allow Rudel to die within my arms,
 And then return consolèd by his friend!
 Without a doubt, the world would so advise.
 No, no! I'll do no act that's common-place!
 For me, no bliss that's bought at such a price!
 I dreamed of love sublime, I'll have it so,
 If not because of strange mysticity,
 Then through the pride of some uncommon crime!

SORISMONDE.

You're seeking now some new subtlety.

MELISSINDE.

My love disclosed, what would Bertrand decide?

SORISMONDE.

I understand.

MELISSINDE.

'Tis what is tempting me.

SORISMONDE.

To vanquish loyalty—that may resist?

MELISSINDE.

You have it. How atrocious a success!
 But where's the one who never longed for this?
 What woman worthy of a woman's name?
 How loved the man we've led to infamy
 And must console in his devoted guilt.
 O man, it must be sweet to our heart
 To see you, by some baseness, set at naught
 This honour that you're ever speaking of!
 Who never longed to be, as I would now,
 The evil one with fascinating eyes
 Who causes virtue's haughty march to stop,
 Not quite Delilah, no, but Omphale?
 To bind a hero with a golden hair!
 Which one of us, indeed, would not be glad
 To hold in thrall Orestes, if he knew
 That Pylades succumbs—and still remained?

SCENE VII.

MELISSINDE, BERTRAND.

BERTRAND (*entering*).

Your brilliant galley's ready and it waits.
 Your sailors. . . .

MELISSINDE (*to herself*).

This temptation's horrible!
 (*Exit Sorismonde, who has been slowly withdrawing*).

BERTRAND.

Why do you stare at me with eyes so vague?
 Why do you nervously torment your rings?

MELISSINDE.

Perhaps there is a cause that may prevent
 My going with you to. . . .

BERTRAND (*eagerly*).

No cause exists!

MELISSINDE.

Still must I wait a while. I'm trembling, see!
—Suppose I love already?

BERTRAND (*with violence*).

You do not!

MELISSINDE.

He said it well.—Such is the truth, alas!
I love, and love alone retains me here.

BERTRAND (*starting*).

You love another! Whom? I'll kill the man!

MELISSINDE.

You'd kill him not, if I should say his name.

BERTRAND (*beside himself*).

Oh! speak it!

MELISSINDE.

Must I?

BERTRAND.

Yes!

MELISSINDE (*walking toward him, deeply moved*).

I shall then.

BERTRAND (*falling back terrified*).

Stop!

No, speak you not his name! Oh! speak it not!
For if it is. . . .

(*drawing his sword*).

I'll slay him instantly!

MELISSINDE.

Oh! do not strike! I uttered not the name!

BERTRAND (*dropping his sword*).

A felon knight am I!

MELISSINDE.

Your honour's safe!

BERTRAND.

It's not!—For in my heart's a burst of joy

MELISSINDE.

Then proud am I who cause your felony!

BERTRAND.

But, oh! how can I rob a dying man?

Oh! go to him! You have no wicked heart!

MELISSINDE.

'Tis why I do not go; for, if I did,

My heart would mollify, and might relapse
Into some new, absurd and noble dream.

How could I meet him and remain unmoved?

I loved him long, Bertrand, you comprehend. . . .

He was—alas! I feel it, and I sigh!—

The better part of me—while you're the worse!

So that I can be yours, be thine,¹ I will

Not see Rudel! I will not go to him!

Unless, perchance, you now insist again!

BERTRAND.

I know not! I Rudel I love you so!

—Oh! turn away from me those loving eyes!

That window open seaward frightens me.

MELISSINDE (*runs to the window, closes it and leans
back against it*).

Well, now it's closed! And thou art mine to keep!

¹Note.—Here, and through the remainder of this Act, there is an intentional alternation of *you* and *thou*, showing when Melissinde and Bertrand are carried away by passion, or reclaimed by reason. *Thou* in French is caressing, indicative of intimacy and indulgent affection. With what art this *thou* and the *you* are used successively by the poet, to determine varying emotions, will be easily perceived.

It's closed, I say, and shall not ope again!
Now let's forget! This palace is a world!

(She goes toward him.)

The air is loaded with perfumes. We'll breathe!
This palace be our home, we'll leave it ne'er!
Now see the warmth of roses on the floor
Where lilies spread their coldness in the morn!
—The window's closed, I say; abolish fear!—
Pale flowers born of dream are now foresworn;
Love giveth richer blossoms. Smile thou here!
We shall ignore the world. How should we know?
We'll question nobody. E'er at my feet
Thy life. And naught shall be but our embrace!
Why should we feel remorse, or even fear?
Who ever spoke of galleys, of Rudel?
No living soul! Naught's true but our love!
Beyond this window here, the golden beach
Extends toward the blue; no galley's there!
Some day, far off, when we shall open it,
The window'll show but light, and nothing more.
And then we'll laugh. What childish story's this
About the hoisting of a sail that's black?
An idle tale, Bertrand!—The window's closed!—
Oh! think of naught, belovèd, naught!
Why should we see, call up most awful things
Beyond this window? See how calm it looks!
It smiles in its enamel and its gold!

BERTRAND.

You speak forever of that window there!

MELISSINDE.

'Tis false! I see it not.—I love thee so!
I wish to speak to thee, of thee alone.
How grand upon thy ample collar looks
This clasp. Thou hadst it from?

BERTRAND.

Joffroy Rudel.

MELISSINDE.

Then what? Just tear it off!

BERTRAND.

Oh! brother dear,

Your jewels did the deed!

MELISSINDE.

To capture me
Thou hadst enough in doublet made of brown,
Both soiled and torn in battle or by sea,
But with that look of thine adventure gave;
Then, for a clasp, thy neck had had my lips!
Oh! start not, nor withdraw thy pleading eyes!
Thy gaze away from me is but a lie!
Thou knowest that. . . .

BERTRAND.

Thy voice enraptures me!
(The window opens suddenly, as if a gale were blowing.)

MELISSINDE.

The sea-wind's blown the window open, look!

BERTRAND.

The window open. . . .

MELISSINDE.

Close it!

BERTRAND.

No!—I fear
Too much I'd see, perhaps, a sail that's black!

MELISSINDE.

Then look aside, and close it rapidly.

BERTRAND.

No, no! I feel I'd look ahead!

MELISSINDE (*rises to go to the window, creeping along the wall*).

Avoid

Approaching from the front. . . . Obliquely, so!

(*As she nears the window, she hesitates, dares not close it, backs slowly, still hugging the wall, and falls near Bertrand, upon the sofa.*)

This place is good! From here we cannot see
And now let's seek the depths of our love,
Wrapped in ourselves as are all happy ones!

BERTRAND.

Thou saidst?

MELISSINDE.

I say that every happiness,
Behind it, has an open window so,
Through which there comes a breath that chills the soul.
The window's ever there to claim its own!
Men turn and crouch. They will not go to look,
For they would see stern duty's galley there
To call them from the bliss that holds them fast!
Or else, if fate had spoke, they'd see reproach
In waving folds of black aloft, remorse!
So nestle they in cushions, motionless;
They cling to happiness and to the dream
That one look through the window would destroy!
They would not learn if they are murderers! . . .
Let's do the same. . . . in coward cushions' ease!
(*She puts her arms around him and they remain enclasped.*)

BERTRAND.

Yes, let us stay! Alas! poor woman, though,
How can we stay? Have I, hast thou a soul
Debased enough to leave us happy thus?
We're surely not as others are!

MELISSINDE.

We are!

I love thee!

(Joyful cries are heard through the window.)

BERTRAND *(astonished)*.

What is that?

MELISSINDE.

Oh! nothing, noise
Upon the terrace where the pages play.

VOICES *(outside)*.

One. . . . three, . . . eight. . . . ten. . . .

MELISSINDE.

It's nothing, I repeat.
Just listen; they are playing knuckle-bones.

VOICES.

A lovely day!

BERTRAND.

I love thee, Melissinde.
What fairy had foreseen, when thou wert named,
Thy silken hair, the sweetness of thy lips?

VOICES.

The sea is calm! Oh! Oh! just look.

BERTRAND *(startled)*.

O God!

They point at what?

MELISSINDE.

Oh! something far-away!

VOICE.

That galley! Which?

BERTRAND.

I know the galley meant!

MELISSINDE.

Well, do not listen!

BERTRAND.

I cannot resist!

MELISSINDE.

Be deaf. . . like me! . . . What did they say? . . .

BERTRAND (*with a gesture of discouragement*).

Resist! . . .

MELISSINDE.

It's not the only galley! . . . Why believe? . . .

VOICE.

And now they hoist a sail! Oh! look! It's black! . . .

(*Motion by Melissinde and Bertrand.*)

VOICE.

I'm going down toward the beach.—Come on!

(*Noise of voices and steps growing distant. Bertrand and Melissinde dare not look at one another, and they slowly draw apart. Long silence.*)

MELISSINDE (*almost in a whisper*).

They're gone! . . .

BERTRAND.

Yes, gone! . . .

(*He absentmindedly picks up Melissinde's scarf, that had remained on the sofa, and carries it to his nostrils.*)

This perfume's sweet, indeed!

You said, a while ago, that it is . . . what?

MELISSINDE.

What? . . . Amber.

BERTRAND.

Oh! . . . Your scarf. . . I bear it to
My lips. Your scarf. . . .

(Falling suddenly with terrible cries and sobs.)

My God! Now all is done!
He's dead! dead! dead! My brother and my friend!
All's over! Gone. . . . without the bliss supreme
He sought! . . . and I . . . and you. . . . what have
we done?

MELISSINDE.

It's awful! But, at least, I have you now!

BERTRAND.

You have a traitor! Oh! the worthy mate!

MELISSINDE.

A traitor who betrays for love is great!

BERTRAND.

I've not the greatness of a traitor such!
I'm not the hero of a lordly crime;
I'm but the child who's softened by the breeze,
The feeble heart that floats along in life,
With innocent betrayal in its wake!
To make of me a traitor's easy, yes!
For I am bound to go where impulse leads.
This morn, I was heroically brave,
And now, and now! I'm slave to a perfume!
I am the moment's thing. I know myself!
You say you have me now? But that is naught!
You have the breeze's sigh, a poet's breath,
The fleeting waters where the hour smiles!

MELISSINDE.

Bertrand, remorse deceives you here. . . .

BERTRAND.

Remorse

But proves that I belong not to the strong

Who, when a crime's committed, make it yield!
 Remorse is still and ever weakness mine!
 No, no! Among all wretches I'm the worst,
 For good or evil, I cannot conclude!
 With impulse, promise and with thrilling voice,
 I cannot persevere, I'm never free!
 —Devotion such, and treason at the end!
 A crime—and then repentance all in vain!

MELISSINDE.

Bertrand!

BERTRAND.

Oh! mayest thou, though tortured too,
 Despise me now as I despise myself,
 O thou whose art, with Circe's subtlety,
 Hath damned me for a fancy!

MELISSINDE (*crushed*).

What! He took
 Me for a woman offering her love!
 He saw not that, for crime, remorse and loss
 Of honour, there was compensation in
 A passion broad and lofty as the skies!
 Oh! dream superb! I followed it alone!
 —And 'tis for this we did that awful deed!

BERTRAND (*beyond himself*).

Through her this ruin, yes, through her!
 (*Falling to his knees and weeping.*)

No, no!

I said it not! Forgive me! Oh! forgive!
 The deed is done, and I must have thy lips,
 I must! Thou can'st not ween me from them now!
 Thy hair for my remorse must be a shroud!
 I will, I can no more remain alone!

MELISSINDE.

Too late!—Begone!—How small thy sentiments!

—And 'tis for this we did the awful deed!—
 But why reproach for thee, when I deceived
 Myself e'en more than I deluded thee?
 Oblivion with thee was not supreme,
 For I remained divided still within!
 Alas! my anxious soul, say where and how
 Will ever come to thee satiety!
 For lasting thirst and lasting hunger too,
 Where is the bread, and where's the cooling spring?

BERTRAND.

All's done!

MELISSINDE.

Yes, done!

BERTRAND.

O Melissinde!

MELISSINDE.

Bertrand!

BERTRAND.

To think what torture must have been his death!

MELISSINDE (*going to the window*).

Betrayed and dead! Have mercy! No revenge!
 I'll seek thee now!

(*With a loud cry.*)

Bertrand, the sail is white!

BERTRAND.

Oh! God!

MELISSINDE.

They said. . . .

BERTRAND (*who has gone to the window and points
 to the offing*).

It was the mournful sail
 Upon that fading ship that bears away

The body of the Knight-Whose-Arms-are-Green!
But see! Our galley rides at anchor still!
Its sail is white!

MELISSINDE.

Against an azure sky!
X As white as hope of pardon! Gracious God,
Prolong, I pray, the whiteness of the sail
In which I see, at last, my star supreme!
O duty, voice that we subdue in vain,
I come! I come to thee, Joffroy Rudel!
I come! And thou art dearer to me now
By all the ill I nearly did to thee!

(Exit.)

CURTAIN.

END OF ACT III.

ACT IV.

Set of ACT I.—Light of pink and gold preceding sunset. Joffroy Rudel, in the same place, on his stretcher, in the rear. More livid than in the morning, his eyes straining toward the shore, completely motionless. Nearby, observing him, Erasmus, the physician. On his knees, his face hidden in his hands, at the foot of the stretcher, Father Trophime. To the right and to the left, the sailors greatly excited against Squarciafico, who, standing in the centre, with his arms folded, bare headed, and turned toward Joffroy Rudel, is concluding his explanations. The sailors murmur. The pilot restrains them as they are about to fall upon Squarciafico.

SCENE I.

JOFFROY RUDEL, FATHER TROPHIME, ERASMUS, SQUARCIAFICO,
the SAILORS: BRUNO, BISTAGNE, MARRIAS, PEGOFAT,
TROBALDO, FRANCOIS, *etc.*

SQUARCIAFICO.

And now I've told you all! She loves him, yes,
She loves him! So, delay explains itself!

THE SAILORS.

Enough!—A gag!

(Joffroy Rudel looks steadfastly at the shore. Not a muscle of his face moves.)

THE SKIPPER *(to the sailors)*.

Oh! let him speak!

THE SAILORS.

No, no!

The coward comes to kill the Prince! He'll not!

SQUARCIAFICO, (*speaking to the Prince*).

Your friend Bertrand. . . .

PEGOFAT.

He lies!

SQUARCIAFICO.

The Princess too. . . .

BRUNO.

The Princess! Never!

FRANCOIS.

Falsehood!

THE SKIPPER.

Let him speak!

(*Joffroy Rudel has not moved. He still gazes at the shore.*)

SQUARCIAFICO (*louder*).

The felon then. . . .

BISTAGNE.

Yourself!

SQUARCIAFICO.

But they're insane!

Yes, she and he, good Prince! Oh! hear me, please!
Your heart remains in sad expectancy. . . .

ERASMUS.

The Prince, dear Sir, can understand no more.

SQUARCIAFICO.

What torture, though, for him that is ashore
To know that, ere he died, Rudel was told
The tale! The torture treachery deserves!

ERASMUS.

The Prince, I say, can neither hear, nor speak.
His eyes alone retain a sign of life!

SQUARCIAFICO.

But he should learn. . . .

ERASMUS.

He hears no more.

FATHER TROPHIME (*with eyes above*).

Thank God!

SQUARCIAFICO (*to the skipper*).

Confusion! But—suppose this hypocrite
Should dare return, then weep, and bend the knee
Before the corpse of him that he betrayed,—
You'd tell him that Rudel rejected him
And cursed him, having heard that tale of mine?

THE SKIPPER (*to the sailors, pointing to Squarcia-
fico*).

This man is yours—to hang him if you will!

SQUARCIAFICO.

To hang!

THE SAILORS.

To death! Blaspheming liar!

PEGOFAT.

No,

The Princess never could. . . .

SQUARCIAFICO.

I said. . . .

BRUNO.

Be still!

We'll not allow the Princess to be smirched.

FRANCOIS.

She'll come!

BISTAGNE.

Be sure!

TROBALDO.

We have the promise too

Of Sir Bertrand!

SQUARCIAFICO.

But hear me first. . . . And then. . . .

PEGOFAT.

Oh! you must have some weighty interest
To make you lie so!

SQUARCIAFICO.

Lie! What lack of brains!

BRUNO.

And so you bring to us distressing news?

SQUARCIAFICO.

I came. . . .

MARRIAS.

You'd crush the hope we've cherished so?

SQUARCIAFICO.

I came. . . .

FRANCOIS.

To say to those whose goal is She:
You'll see her not?

SQUARCIAFICO.

But wait. . . .

PEGOFAT.

Your malice soils—

The one we idolize!

SQUARCIAFICO.

I'm opening

Your eyes!

TROBALDO.

Suppose we wish to leave them closed!

SQUARCIAFICO.

You're dreamers all!

JUAN.

Suppose we wish to dream!

FRANCOIS.

So you'd suppress the Princess Far-Away!
'Tis well, now we'll suspend you from the yard!

PEGOFAT.

Let's hew his neck!

BRUNO.

Find torture that is slow!

FRANCOIS.

We cut their feet off first, we Catalans!

SQUARCIAFICO.

Ah! Ah!

BISTAGNE.

Tear out his tongue.

TROBALDO.

His nostrils too!

SQUARCIAFICO.

Do not!

PEGOFAT.

Let's do as Northern sailors do!
We'll nail his hand against the mast; for this
We'll use a knife inserted through the palm;

Then he himself, beneath the lash, shall draw
 Away his hand, most gently, oping it
 Between the fingers!

SQUARCIAFICO.

I! my hand! Relent!

PEGOFAT (*quietly*).

A bit of hand is sometimes left behind!

SQUARCIAFICO (*resisting*).

But I'm a Genoese!

(*All the sailors stand aside.*)

BRUNO.

Hey!

FRANCOIS.

Oh!

BISTAGNE.

The deuce!

PEGOFAT.

Commit no act that's irretrievable!

. . . . My lord's a Genoese!

(*They all bow to Squarciafico.*)

SQUARCIAFICO (*quieted and chafing*).

From Genoa!

(*Looks around with assurance, while they all bow again to him.*)

BRUNO (*erect*).

So then, of course. . . .

(*Changing suddenly his manner, and seizing Squarciafico by the collar.*)

I do not care a snap!

SQUARCIAFICO (*bewildered*).

How?

FRANCOIS (*pushing him toward the gunwale*).

Overboard. . . . and swim to Genoa!

SQUARCIAFICO.

Assist me!

FATHER TROPHIME (*running up to the sailors*).

Stop! Enough!

PEGOFAT.

Your prayer is vain.

He's not sewed in a bag, and he can swim!

SQUARCIAFICO (*clinging to the gunwale*).

I've money. . . .

THE SAILORS.

Overboard!

SQUARCIAFICO.

I

MARRIAS.

Here he goes!

(*Squarciafico is thrown overboard.*)

FATHER TROPHIME.

What have you done?

BRUNO.

We've drowned his budding youth.

FRANCOIS (*to Father Trophime*).

The wicked thirst for water, mind!

VOICE OF SQUARCIAFICO (*jeering, outside*).

I swim!

BISTAGNE.

You do? Then wait!

(*He takes a bow, bends it and aims.*)

FATHER TROPHIME.

No! no!

THE SAILORS.

Yes, take good aim!

(Everybody to the right, leaning over the gunwale to watch Squarciafico. Erasmus alone remains by Joffroy Rudel, who has taken notice of nothing.)

ERASMUS.

The Prince! Behold! A change comes over him.

(All turn and watch Joffroy Rudel who slowly raises his hand and points to something in the distance.)

FATHER TROPHIME.

What is he looking at?

PEGOFAT.

He points to it!

BRUNO.

Why, yes! He's right! Just see! There's something pink!

And gold! It comes!

FRANCOIS.

He's right, for we can see
A gardenful of flowers floating here.

(Sound of distant music.)

BISTAGNE.

Hurrah! The Genoese perversely lied!

No doubt of it! There's music! It is She! . . .

PEGOFAT.

A galley like the sun, with rays of gold!

BRUNO *(running around as if mad, and jostling everybody).*

'Tis She! I tell you that it's She! You hear?

(The sailors climb upon the gunwale, into the rigging, upon the yards, and wave their caps.)

FATHER TROPHIME (*falling to his knees*).

Be thanked, O Lord! for not permitting that
This soul be called before its joy arrives!

(*Music becomes more distinct.*)

PEGOFAT.

She comes! The ensign is of purple! See!

BRUNO.

The sail of silk is pink!

FRANCOIS.

The rigging all
Entwined with flowers!

BISTAGNE.

Never galley such!
A little hanging garden is the top!

TROBALDO.

A thrilling sound of violas! Listen!

BRUNO.

Look!

The oars themselves are wound with garlands!

PEGOFAT.

Yes,

And every time their blades are swept ahead,
The wave is strewn with petals floating bright!

THE SAILORS.

You see the Princess?—Yes, 'tis She!—She stands
Beneath a crimson awning bright as day!

JUAN.

How beautiful!

THE SKIPPER.

The galley glides along
With gorgeous Persian fabrics trailing aft!

ERASMUS.

With triangle, and lute, and psaltery!

FATHER TROPHIME.

The Queen of Sheba!

MARRIAS.

Shout! Hurrah! Hurrah!

ALL (*waving their arms*).

Hail, Melissinde! . . . The Princess, hail! Hurrah!
The Princess!—Hail!

ERASMUS.

What is it now that moves
Within my throat?
(*He shouts.*)

Hurrah!

(*Turning toward Father Trophime.*)

I shouted too!

FATHER TROPHIME (*shaking him by the hand*).
And like them, too, you shed a tear for joy!

THE SKIPPER.

Make ready for the galley there to port!
Cut down the bulwark, so the fairy pass!
(*With axes they broaden the opening in the bulwark.*)

FATHER TROPHIME.

The Prince! His mantle! Quick! He must be robed!
Let's move him further, so that Melissinde
Can be prepared for such a sight. Poor Prince,
His eyes are glassy, and his nose is pinched!

THE SKIPPER.

She comes!

PEGOFAT.

Our jackets now beneath her feet!
(*They make a path for her on the deck with the torn
garments they take from their shoulders.*)

Be silent!—Stand aside!—She!—Do not push!
Upon your knees!

(Complete silence. Music ceases. The galley stops alongside with its fumes of burning censers. Melissinde appears, and, on the point of stepping aboard the prince's galley, remains a moment motionless.)

ONE OF THE SAILORS *(softly)*.

The Holy Virgin!—She!

(Two Saracen slaves advance to unroll before Melissinde a strip of rich carpet. She stops them by a wave of the hand and then speaks in tremulous tones.)

SCENE II.

The Same. MELISSINDE, SORISMONDE, WOMEN, CHILDREN, SLAVES, *etc.*, then BERTRAND.

MELISSINDE.

No! I prefer to tread these noble rags!

(She advances slowly, looking around her, astounded. The women place themselves in the rear noiselessly. The musicians remain in Melissinde's galley. Erasmus and Trophime stand, concealing him, before Rudel, who seems to have fainted and whose eyes are closed.)

MELISSINDE *(overcome by what she sees)*.

This galley and this weeping crew! A dream!

And all these people here upon their knees!

I never dreamt how sorely they were tried!

(To the sailors.)

My friends!

PEGOFAT.

'Twas She who spoke the words, 'twas She!

MELISSINDE *(advancing)*.

So many suffering, in tatters, wan!

And joy illuminates their weary eyes
 Through me!—And I'm relief!—My heart is rent!—
 How could I know, and how could I be moved
 Like this, although Bertrand described their woe?
 Be told. . . . is naught! To go and see is right!
 (Shuddering in spite of her efforts.)
 But he. . . . Joffroy Rudel?

FATHER TROPHIME *(to Melissinde)*.

Be stout of heart!
 He's very low—remember—and his face. . . .

MELISSINDE.

His face, indeed! Then I'll control myself!

FATHER TROPHIME *(standing aside and drawing
 away Erasmus)*.

Approach then. . . .

MELISSINDE *(perceiving Rudel)*.

Gracious God!

(She falls upon her knees, sobbing.)

For me! . . . For me! . . .

*(She weeps silently. Rudel's eyes open, notice her,
 grow larger and full of light, while a smile comes over his
 lips.)*

ERASMUS.

Observe!

MELISSINDE.

× He smiles! . . . Oh! blessèd smile! . . . To think. . . .
 To think I came so near not seeing it!

FATHER TROPHIME.

You see, we dressed him in his princely robes.
 He doubted not one moment that you'd come.
 He neither hears nor speaks. His eyes—we feared. . . .
 But he descried you coming, first of all!

MELISSINDE (*still on her knees looking at him*).
And during my delay he doubted not?

PEGOFAT.

No, Princess, no!

BRUNO.

No more, in truth, did we!

MELISSINDE.

No more did you!

THE SKIPPER.

Keep quiet, silent, men!

FRANCOIS (*forcibly*).

Not even when that Genoese had said. . . .

MELISSINDE (*terrified*).

The Genoese! . . . And here! . . .

BERTRAND (*who just before appeared on the deck*).

The wretch! . . . You should! . . .

FATHER TROPHIME, (*to Melissinde*).

He could not hear.

JOFFROY RUDEL (*faintly*).

I did,—I heard it all.

MELISSINDE (*joining her hands*).

Great God! What did, what could you think? Oh!
shame!

JOFFROY (*softly*).

I thought: What wicked stories madmen tell!
But not a word spoke I, or muttered e'en!
For you were coming, see! Then would I not
—Since every word of mine is numbered now—
Have wasted even one, for they were yours!

MELISSINDE.

Good God!

JOFFROY.

I would not listen to the man!
For I was looking over there. I felt
That I should look, and look, unceasingly,
That such a gaze was strong in mute appeal,
x And that its fixity, unswerving faith,
Would draw you to me irresistibly,
E'en had you been the victim of a spell!

MELISSINDE.

Dear Prince!

JOFFROY.

And so, you see it now, you came!

(He notices Bertrand.)

Bertrand, my thanks! Your hand!

(Bertrand, urged by Father Trophime, advances and, greatly moved, places his hand in Rudel's.)

Thought you that I

Could ever, on the word of such a wretch,
Suspect one moment heart so dear as yours?

(Bertrand kisses Rudel's hand.)

MELISSINDE.

Your noble faith. . . .

JOFFROY.

Now meets with due reward!

You're here—and now my dream is realised!

(Smiling.)

The Princess came! All hail! my Princess, hail!

(He closes his eyes, exhausted.)

ERASMUS.

One moment.—He's exhausted—He'll revive!

BERTRAND (*low to Father Trophime*).

I cannot more! I choke! I'll tell him all!

FATHER TROPHIME.

Do not, my son!

(*To Bertrand who hangs his head.*)

You think too much of self!

You would, by coward words, relieve your heart,

But trouble thus for naught this hour last!

Be silent, so that he shall die in peace!

BERTRAND.

But soon he'll learn how I deceived him!

FATHER TROPHIME.

Then,

His soul, rejoicing in eternal calm,

Will be indulgent, full of Christian love,

On seeing how your soul, my son, is racked.

MELISSINDE.

My God, oh! let him hear! I'll answer now

X His noble faith, and really live his dream!

Belief in flowers may engender them:

The woman he believed me I shall be!

In expiation, I must sweeten death

For him, whate'er to me the effort cost!

By grace of mine the stricken poet must,

Without a pang, depart from anxious life,

And, in the gladness of a loving smile,

Pass softly into night where flesh is lost!

—Let beauty screen time's last brutality,

And, when he opes his eyes, let petals rain,

While perfumes rise in vapours light and blue,

And, harps are singing 'neath the harpers' touch!

—Our love was pure. Oh! music, add to it

A chaste delight of rapture physical!

ERASMUS.

The Prince is waking. . . .

MELISSINDE (*leaning over him*).

Prince Joffroy Rudel!

JOFFROY.

It was no dream. . . .

MELISSINDE.

You called me, I am here!

Your lasting, faithful love was known to me,
 I heard it oft in many stanzas sung
 By pilgrims and by jugglers passing by!
 Thus were you like the palm whose flowers are
 To other flowers blooming far away
 Betrothèd; and, by every gentle breeze,
 Your thoughts were wafted lovingly to mine!
 The tears you wept at eve, for all in vain,
 Impressed my soul and trickled down my hands!
 But, since you wish to know the heart unknown,
 Since you have called me, Prince, to-day I've come.
 And I have come, you see, O cherished friend,
 With censers swinging, as was truly meet,
 With cypress, sandal and with rose perfume,
 While merry rings the sweet Tortosa bell,
 And softly quiver lute and psaltery;
 For now has come, at last, our wedding day!

JOFFROY (*dazzled*).

In joy like this, where is the certainty?

MELISSINDE.

What think you of the Princess Far-Away?

JOFFROY.

I gaze at her. . . bewitched! . . . My every thought!
 She's as I wished her, and her flowing hair
 From out the twister comes in double wave;
 The sun, my last, illuminates her ring!
 Beware those jewel's weight, O slender neck!
 Her smile, so new, is a familiar one!

Her voice, the music of a gushing spring,
Is like a cooling draught to parchèd lips,
And in her wondrous eyes, her azure eyes
So deep, I'm lost as in the infinite!

MELISSINDE (*slipping her ring upon his finger*).

So, let your finger bear this amethyst;
The colour suits our melancholy bliss.

(*Placing her collar around his neck.*)

And here is my heraldic collar now,

(*Loosing her hair over him.*)

And here's my hair, for, like a Jason new,
You've pined and suffered, and you've struggled for
The prize you coveted: this Golden Fleece!
O pilgrim striving t'ward the goal of love,
Here are the hands you sang, these hands of mine!
And, since you thirst to hear it—listen now—
Here is my tender and devoted voice!

JOFFROY.

Oh! fear you not my eyes of gray and glass?

MELISSINDE.

And now you have my lips upon your eyes!

JOFFROY.

Oh! fear you not these lips that fever burns?

MELISSINDE.

And now you have my lips upon your lips!

(*Silence.*)

JOFFROY (*calling*).

Bertrand!

(*Bertrand comes up. Joffroy speaks to Melissinde, pointing to the sailors kneeling around him.*)

I meant to tell you here, to-day,
The heart these people have. . .

(*Weakening, to Bertrand.*)

you tell her, you.

BERTRAND (*standing, the sailors around him kneeling*).
 Could you but know, beneath their ruggedness,
 These childlike souls, spontaneous and frank!
 Oh! love you these obscure and fervent men,
 Devoted ones who bore the dreamer on!
 As do the purple thistles on the coast,
 Beneath their prickles they have azure hearts!

MELISSINDE.

My warmest smile to them!

JOFFROY.

I'm cold!

MELISSINDE.

Joffroy,

You're in my arms, enclasped. . . .

JOFFROY.

I'm warm again,

But anguish shakes me with an awful chill.

You're here?

MELISSINDE.

I hold you close, I'm rocking you

As if you were a babe.

JOFFROY.

I fear no more.

MELISSINDE.

* Your thoughts to our love and to the height,
 Among all lovers, we must reach! Oh! think
 That I am here and that I'm Melissinde!
 Now say again how much and how we love!

JOFFROY.

I'm dying!

MELISSINDE.

See these pearls around my neck!

JOFFROY.

Your neck divine! But. . . . all is vanishing. . . .
I feel. . . . I'm going. . . .

MELISSINDE.

No! My dress, catch hold
Of it, and cling to me beneath my hair.

JOFFROY.

Your hair! Yes, yes! I want your hair again!
I'm in its sweet perfume. . . . I'm. . . .

MELISSINDE (*to Father Trophime*).

Saintly priest,
It's time, alas! for you to speak, perhaps?

FATHER TROPHIME.

No. Love is holy. 'Tis a gift of God,
And those who die of love are surely saved.

MELISSINDE.

Joffroy Rudel, our love was beautiful!
X Our souls alone have met and joined their wings!

JOFFROY.

Your mantle is in stones and orphreys rich.
I'll touch it. Oh! my hand's already cold;
My fingers miss the orphreys and the stones.
They are already dead!

FATHER TROPHIME.

Recite the prayers.
(*All in a group around him.*)

Proficiscere anima.

(*The prayer is murmured by those around him.*)

JOFFROY.

I die!

MELISSINDE (*to musicians*).

Let harps relieve the sadness of the chant!

(*Slow music.*)

JOFFROY.

Speak on! Your voice is music that's divine,
The one to which I yearned to die!

MELISSINDE (*holding him in her arms*).

I love you!

FATHER TROPHIME.

Deus clemens. . . .

(*Harp music through which the muttering of prayer is faintly heard.*)

JOFFROY.

Speak on! I would not hear
The coming, coming, stealthy step, the step. . . .
Speak on, and I will die without a groan!

FATHER TROPHIME.

Libera, Domine. . . .

(*Prayers and harps.*)

MELISSINDE.

At eve, dear friend,
Among the terebinths, I dreamt of you;
Then, through the bluish myrtles when I went,
At morn, and, pensive, 'neath their branches sat,
I held with you sweet converse secretly.

JOFFROY.

Speak on!

FATHER TROPHIME.

. . . .ex omnibus periculis. . . .

MELISSINDE.

And, later, with the lilies tall and slim,
When one of them would bend and seem to nod,

As it alone was worthy to receive
 X The secret of our royal love so white. . . .
 I told the trembling lily whom I love!

JOFFROY.

Speak on! Your voice is harmony itself.
 Speak on!

MELISSINDE.

I told the lily whom I love!

JOFFROY.

Now can I die. . . .my cup of bliss is full!
 Be thanked, O Lord! Be thanked, O Melissinde!
 X How many sink, exhausted, by the road,
 And never see their Princess Far-Away!

MELISSINDE (*rocking him in her arms*).

X How many see her, though, too soon, too long,
 And die but after disenchanting days!
 To sail no sooner landed's better than
 To see decay mar freshness on the shore!
 There's rapture for you in my arms, because
 There's still a Stranger in the Sister here!
 You'll not have known the wasting sadness of
 The idol grown a mere familiar thing!
 X There's in me still that far-away you loved.
 And, though your eyes must close to ope no more,
 You'll see me ever in my shadeless light,
 As if 'twere always time the first, the first!

JOFFROY.

The Princess came! My Princess, now farewell!

FATHER TROPHIME.

Libera, Domine. . . .

MELISSINDE (*standing, and holding Joffroy, in her arms, toward the dazzling splendour of the sea. She and he seem to be enveloped in the gorgeousness of sunset.*)

The sky's aglow!

Behold! A prince's and a poet's death
Is yours, with head at rest as dream foretold,
In love, in grace and majesty supreme!
You die with heaven's blessing, undistressed
By trappings and by sights funereal;
In flowers' fragrance and in harmony,
A death that's spared all pain and bitterness,

(*Joffroy Rudel's head falls to one side; he is dead. Melissinde lays him gently down. Father Trophime comes up.*)

Close not his eyes; he's gazing at me still!

SORISMONDE (*terrified*).

His hands are locked around your hair!

MELISSINDE.

It's his!

(*With a dagger that she takes from Joffroy's belt, she cuts her hair, that remains in the hands of Rudel. The hair falls across his body.*)

BERTRAND.

Not that! It is too much!

MELISSINDE (*without turning toward Bertrand*).

Who spoke?

BERTRAND.

Too much!

MELISSINDE.

'Twas you, Bertrand? We must forswear ourselves!
No thread is left of the deceptive vail.

X My soul at last was sister to a soul,
And I am different. The good I've done

Already shows its marvellous effect!
 What's dream, or love, or flower red or white,
 By gorgeous Spring, the spring of abnegation?
 To live henceforth in an eternal Spring,
 I will repair to where Mount Carmel is.

BERTRAND.

Alas!

MELISSINDE (*to the sailors*).

Your task, good sailors, endeth here.
 But why these rags, and why this famished look?
 You shall have bread, and rest and clothing too!
 (*Tearing precious stones from off her mantle.*)
 But I have sapphires here! And rubies here!
 I'll tear from me this weight of trinkets vain!
 Pick up the gems! They're not a payment. No,
 Good friends, the pay for your devotion is
 The grateful love the Princess bears you all!
 And here are beryls, here are opals too!
 And with these stones I cast to you my heart!
 A rain of diamonds, and a snow of pearls!
 Ah! now this mantle's grown divinely light!

BERTRAND.

And I henceforward?

MELISSINDE.

You? Enroll these men,
 And battle for the Cross!

THE SAILORS (*brandishing their weapons*).

The Cross! We're yours!

THE SKIPPER.

To-morrow we will burn the goodly craft
 That bore the poet on.

TROBALDO (*pointing to Bertrand*).

Then, bid the chief!

BERTRAND.

We'll reach the Tomb, and there we'll cull the Palm!

MELISSINDE (*backing toward her galley*).

Farewell! No tears—I go to holy peace!

I've learnt at last what bliss essential is!

FATHER TROPHIME (*kneeling by Joffroy's body*).

X Undying love is work for Heaven done!

CURTAIN.

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